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Hirl, the Hunchback;

OR,

The Swordmaker of the Santee.

BY DR. J. H. ROBINSON,

AUTHOR OF "PATHAWAY," "NIGHTSHADE,"
"WHITELAW," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

THE FUGITIVE.

The clattering of horses' feet, the ringing notes of a trumpet, and the shouts of dragoons, suddenly disturbed the solitudes of the Santee. A man with bare head and streaming hair was seen to leap a wall and run rapidly across a glade. Toiling up a rugged ascent, he paused on the summit and looked back upon his pursuers; for the horsemen were evidently such. A glance sufficed to show that they were rapidly gaining ground. A feeling of utter hopelessness for a moment chained him to the spot. Large drops of perspiration rained from his forehead; the blood whirled wildly in his veins; his chest rose and fell violently; and he panted like a dog overheated in the chase.

The thunder of the dragoons rolled nearer and nearer; the sound struck ominously upon his ears.

"Colonel Somerton and his dragoons!" he muttered, drawing the palm of his hand across his hot brow. "Brave as a lion and impetuous as a whirlwind! he must be fleet of foot who baffles him. I have dared his vigilance once too often. How madly he rides—leaping walls, fences, ditches, rocks, and fallen trees! He is *down*—no, he is *up*! It was but a depression of the ground that hid him from view. They see me! I must on!"

He ceased, pressed his hand to his beating heart, and added, bitterly:

"I must *on*, but where? The hounded fox may find a cover, and the hunted stag may turn upon the pack; but I can do neither."

The fugitive darted down the hill, and presently reached the bank of the Santee, the waters of which at that spot were deep and rapid. He hesitated; it required a strong and bold swimmer to dare such a current.

The voice of Colonel Somerton came echoing down the hill.

"Forward, men! forward! The villain is ours!"

That shout quickened him to another effort. He bounded from the bank, was submerged an instant; but, rising, struck out for the opposite shore. The stream bore him downward with irresistible force. He battled with the waters, parting them with his strong, nervous arms.

Somerton spurred his horse, and attempted to follow; but the animal soon lost his footing, and was swept from his course. His dragoons, less heated

by the chase, or more prudent, remained on the bank, watching anxiously the progress of their leader, and the manly exertions of the swimmer, who, notwithstanding the difficulties with which he was obliged to contend, finally effected a landing, far below the point from which he had started. For a short space he lay exhausted upon the earth; then, staggering to his feet, shook the water from his saturated garments. By this time, Somerton was in the middle of the stream; there was no time to be lost. He ran up the bank. Before him was an open field, with a wood beyond. Hope animated his breast, imparting strength to his overtaken limbs. If he could cross the field and enter the wood, he could defy pursuit. Stimulated by this thought, he leaped a high fence, and was making good progress, when, to his dismay, he again heard Somerton thundering after him. The wood was too distant to be attained. At the right of the field there was a tract of broken, ledgy ground, which he believed would embarrass the movements of his pursuers, and toward which he now turned, like the wounded stag, which at every step loses a portion of its strength with its flowing blood. By efforts that seemed superhuman, he reached the more rugged country, and perceived, with satisfaction, that his manoeuvre was attended with success; for Somerton followed with more difficulty and less speed. The instinct of self-preservation that had goaded the fugitive on, grew stronger; his eyes gleamed with new hope. Mounting a ledge, he



SO HIRL, THE HUNCHBACK, THUMPED, AND BLOWED, AND FILED, AND POLISHED ALL ALONE.

turned to observe the more cautious riding of Somerton.

The clatter of sabres in another direction, caused him to start with surprise. Looking to the left, he saw a party of horsemen emerge from the forest, and galloping across the open space, effectually cut off his flight.

"Fortune," he exclaimed, "deserts me in my need!"

"Yield, or I fire!" cried Somerton, drawing a pistol, and spurring up the ascent.

"Spare your powder," answered the man, calmly, seating himself upon a rock. "I am unarmed, and shall no longer struggle to deprive you of the glory of capturing a man whose only crime is a desire to restore law and order to this distracted country."

"Of that we will hold discourse in good time; but at present you are a prisoner," replied Somerton, reining up his panting steed.

"Unable to resist, I can only submit to your authority," returned the man, in a subdued and quiet voice.

"You are called Deering?" said the colonel.

"Men style me thus; but it matters not," replied the man, moodily.

"Were you born across the water, or were your trade less despicable, I might sympathize with your misfortunes," answered Somerton. Then, to one of the horsemen—who had by this time reached the spot—"Captain Rainford, mount this person behind one of your men, and conduct him to camp. By no means allow him to escape. I shall hold you answerable for his safe keeping."

"Perhaps," rejoined Deering, with a slight curl of the lip, "you had better secure me with fetters! There are so few of you, and you attach so much importance to my person."

He glanced at the grim circle of dragoons.

Captain Rainford bit his lips, while Colonel Somerton regarded his prisoner with more attention. The latter slowly arose to his feet, displaying proportions that Somerton could not but admire. In height, he must have been above six feet, with a muscular development which could not be faulted. His figure was straight and martial, with a notable breadth of shoulders, a prominent chest, and arms like a gladiator's. His features were regular and pleasing, but marked with care, and softly tinged with melancholy. His head was bare—his dark brown hair hanging in wet masses over his neck and brow.

In contemplating his face and carriage, the observer lost sight of his apparel, which was of gray home-manufacture. His round-skirted, Quakerish coat, and long waistcoat were unbuttoned and thrown open, exposing his throat and breast—the latter being still agitated by his extraordinary efforts to escape his pursuers.

"It is to be regretted," said Colonel Somerton, with a sigh, "that one born on American soil, and gifted with such a goodly frame of manhood should—"

"Should what?" interrupted Deering, his cheeks aglow with strong emotion. "What is my crime?"

"Let posterity give it a name!" retorted Somerton, turning away with evident aversion.

"Jim Giles," said Captain Rainford, addressing a short, stout dragoon mounted upon a white horse, "take this man up behind you."

"With all respect for your 'thority as a s'perior, I can't do it," replied Giles, touching his cap.

"And why not?" asked Rainford, sternly.

"I've followed you often in the thickest of the fight," returned Giles, deprecatingly, "and never showed my back to the enemy, nor stopped to question whether a thing was right or not, when I had your order for't; but I'll be hanged if I'll ride on the same animal with an out-an'-out traitor and villain, who vallys freedom no more nor he does a cast-away quid o' terbaccer! Try me for mutiny, put me under arrest, or t'otherwise treat me, and I'll submit to your honor's judgment."

While the honest dragoon was thus expressing his sentiments, Deering's face underwent several changes, being by turns pale and red.

"See," muttered Somerton, "in what detestation we are held?"

"Heavens!" exclaimed Deering. "Must this be endured?"

By this time Jim Giles had dismounted.

"Cap'n," he added, taking off his cap and flourishing it by way of emphasis, "I'll give up my critter with right good-will, and will lead him or walk along ahind; but as I said afore, bagonet me if I'll ride in partnerships with him! Havin' fired my gun, I fall back to load."

Sergeant Giles was somewhat addicted to proverbs and the epigrammatic style. His speech was usually interlarded with axiomatic sayings, which made him to a certain degree oracular and dogmatic. It was seldom that he uttered three consecutive sentences without exhibiting this particular trait of character. Although Sergeant Giles was quaint and eccentric, his genial humor and approved integrity rendered him a general favorite in Captain Rainford's company. "Honest Giles," as he was often called, had been in the front of many a battle, was cool under fire, and had more than once been intrusted with secret service, attended with much personal danger. Being such a man, it will easily be understood that he escaped the censure of his superior on this occasion—his refusal to obey being justly attributed to that zeal which made him so good a soldier.

Captain Rainford looked at Deering, and pointed to the empty saddle.

"I understand," he said, and mounted.

"To camp!" cried Somerton, in the brief, sharp tones of habitual command.

Deering grasped the reins mechanically, and with depressed head moved onward with the dragoons.

Somerton and Rainford rode side by side, conversing as they went, while Giles, taken up by a comrade, said many wise things concerning the enormity of receiving British gold and espousing British sentiments to the detriment of one's native country.

It was a dark period in Revolutionary history. Gates had been defeated at Camden, the Carolinas were overrun with hiring soldiers and those native enemies called Tories, whose tender mercies were cruel, and whose inroads were a thousand times more terrible than those of the foreign invader. The Southern campaigns had been unfortunate for the patriots. Their half-starved, poorly-armed troops found it hard to withstand the tide of re-

verses that was setting against them. The demon of Destruction stalked abroad. Harmless citizens were hanged at their own doors by fiends in human form. The land was traversed by British spies, who betrayed the movements of the American forces, frequently marring their most promising combinations, and snatching victory from them when it seemed in their grasp.

"While I deprecate his crime, I pity his fate," said Somerton, making a movement of his hand toward Deering.

"I have no sympathies to waste on him," answered Rainford, shaking his head. "Such miscreants richly deserve the halter."

"True, true!" returned the colonel, pensively. "There is no help for it—he must die!"

"Would to God that the same halter that deprives him of his miserable life, could encircle every Tory neck in the Carolinas at the same instant!" exclaimed Rainford.

"In our zeal, we must not forget to be just," resumed Somerton. "The unfortunate man must have some form of trial. I would not hang a dog without evidence."

"To the devil with your scruples, colonel!" cried Rainford, impatiently. "Is not the measure of testimony already filled to overflowing? Have I not passed more than one night in the saddle in vain attempts to take him, dead or alive? Have we not hunted him across the country like a game beast, and has he not as often eluded us? I venture to say that there is not a more subtle and dangerous fellow in the South than this same Deering, or whatever he may choose to call himself. General Greene, you remember, mentioned him in his last dispatches to Washington, and has given particular instructions to all the partisan officers in this part of the country to make short work with him, if taken. You are not wont to be tender-hearted, Somerton."

"The man shall die. I can do no more!" answered the colonel, dryly.

"Feeling is good in its place; but pity for such a villain is as much out of place as Satan would be in the pulpit."

"It may be so, Rainford, but he's a fine-looking fellow, nevertheless; and, though I execrate his character, he shall have fair play, even to the foot of the gallows."

"Which I hope he may soon reach—which I trust is no offense to your honor," interposed Jim Giles.

"Silence!" cried Somerton, in a tone that hushed every voice, and the party pursued their way to camp without further conversation.

CHAPTER II.

JUDITH REDMOND.

DEERING was thrust into a log-cabin, around which a strong guard was posted by Sergeant Giles, who took not a little pride in showing himself, by his watchfulness, worthy the trust reposed in him by Captain Rainford. The structure in which the prisoner found himself was one of a kind quite common at the time in the colonies, built of large timbers hewn on two sides, interlocked at the ends in a manner to give much firmness to the fabric. It had evidently been used as a prison before, for the long, narrow windows were barred with heavy stanchions of oak.

The rays of the descending sun crept dubiously in through the apertures, falling like pale and startled shadows upon the rough floor. Some straw was heaped in a corner. A deal table stood near the center, upon which lay various irons for the limbs of those who were thought to deserve them, either by their crimes or delinquencies.

Deering contemplated them with an interest rendered peculiar by his situation. His cheerless meditations were interrupted by Giles.

"Colonel Somerton wants to know," he said, bluntly, "if he can do anything to make your short stay among us sort o' comfortable, as 'twere?"

"A kindness I scarcely expected," answered the prisoner, quickly. "Yes, there is—"

Deering stopped.

"Is what?" queried the sergeant.

"Nothing, my good fellow—nothing. 'Twas but an earthly, selfish thought," returned Deering.

"If you have airily thoughts, you'd better put the rein on 'em at once, and not let 'em go to gallopin' to eternity with ye like a detachment of our horse," responded the sergeant, who took no pains to conceal his dislike for the person for whose safe keeping he considered himself responsible.

"Honest Giles, do not trouble yourself about matters that concern myself and God, only," responded Deering, with a slight tone of rebuke.

"Perhaps," continued the sergeant, "you'd like somethin' in the eatin' an' drinkin' way, as you've had a long chase and a long fast."

"I thank you, soldier, but I need nothing, I believe," he said, smiling bitterly; "it makes little difference whether a man dies on a full or an empty stomach."

"I reckon you'll know as soon's most of us!" said Giles; "though you shall have a longer breathin' spell than poor Hale had. Spies are a kind o' cattle that don't flourish 'mong the Continentals. 'Haste makes waste,' it is said, but 'delays are dangerous,' and when you've fired, go to the rear to load."

The sergeant drew himself up, and made his saber rattle ominously.

"A SPY! A SPY!" repeated Deering, with emotion. "When caught is hanged; when hanged is good for nothing," said Giles.

"Sergeant!" said a voice at the door.

"At your honor's service," quoth Giles, with a military salute.

"Do not forget my instructions," said Rainford, "but attend to them with the utmost fidelity. Admit no one without my orders."

"Or the colonel's, your honor?"

"Or the colonel's," added Rainford. "Does the prisoner wish for anything?"

"He says not; but you can question him yourself."

"No, Giles, I hold no discourse with traitors. Were he a born Briton, I would lay up no unkindness against him; but, having been nurtured beneath the kindly suns of the South, I cannot find it in my heart to excuse the unnaturalness of his conduct. Inform him that to-morrow he will share the fate of Hale and other victims of English cruelty. The evi-

dence against him is overwhelming. The very shadow of doubt flies before the accumulated mass of testimony. Hope there is none, save in such spiritual consolation as he may be capable of receiving."

The spy stood motionless near the window, and though he started and changed color more than once while the captain was speaking, he curbed the strong impulse that was upon him, and did not reply to one who disdained to hold converse with him in his low estate.

Colonel Somerton entered the cabin.

"Deering," he said, without harshness, "I have received within the hour instructions from General Greene to use every reasonable endeavor to capture the spy whose name has been so often heard in these parts; and, if successful, to execute him with no more delay than decency requires. But notwithstanding these orders, I shall myself examine you, and if you can answer satisfactorily the questions I shall propose, will send you to General Greene, together with a true statement of the same."

"Proof!" muttered Rainford, contemptuously. "Are not the proofs abundant—overwhelming?"

Rainford threw a stern glance at the prisoner, and contracted his brows. Somerton retired from the cabin without replying to his doughty captain. He had gone but a short distance when Giles overtook him, saying:

"Here's a lady that wishes to see your honor."

"Conduct her to my quarters," said the colonel, absently.

"If your honor will take the trouble to turn your head a little, you'll see her without that delay," added Giles.

In obedience to this suggestion, Somerton looked to his left, and beheld a female, timidly awaiting his notice. Her appearance arrested him at once, and engaged his entire attention.

During changeable and active life in field and camp, he had met many women worthy of admiration; but the lady who now stood before him, in the matter of personal prestige, was superior to them all. Her figure was graceful beyond description, and her air such as to command immediate respect. She was closely veiled, but the silken tissue did not conceal the lovely outlines of her face. Her complexion was wonderfully clear, her eyes brilliant, her mouth of exquisite delicacy, her neck slender, and her bust shapely to perfection.

Somerton observed, with the quick and critical eye of an artist, that her hands and feet were small, and her arms—such portions of them as were not concealed by her dress—white and rounded. A pleasing appreciation of the charm of beauty insensibly stole upon the doughty warrior, unconsciously keeping him mute and motionless. The voice of the lady aroused him from his waking trance.

"Do I address Colonel Somerton?" she asked, her voice flowing like silver ripples over a quiet sea.

"If you seek the person you have done me the honor to mention, you need look no farther," answered Somerton, with a bow. "How can I serve you?"

"I—I have a request," she said, stammering "which—"

"Walk to my quarters, lady, where you may be free from inquisitive eyes, and I will hear you with pleasure. We are not," he added, with a smile, as he entered an unpretending, and weather-worn tent, "so royally lodged as some of his majesty's officers; but I trust that the Continental soldier knows as well what is due to your sex as the most loyal subject in the land."

"I doubt it not," answered the lady, with earnestness, as she followed him beneath the dingy canvas, and accepted the proffered camp-stool.

"Now, lady," said Somerton, gently, "I will listen to your petition—which is already granted, if it be not inconsistent with my duty as a colonial officer."

"My coming concerns the man now in custody," she said, with effort.

"Deering?" interrogated Somerton, in a tone of astonishment.

"It is to that unfortunate person that I refer," responded the lady, in a voice nearly inaudible.

"Lady, I have seen you but a moment, but the thought that you have aught in common with him gives me real pain," said the colonel, feelingly.

"I know that the mark of Cain is on his forehead; that he suffers—most unjustly suffers!" she cried, with touching energy.

"It is indeed the mark of Cain; for whosoever findeth him may kill him; for which act there is the free warrant of the Commander-in-chief of the Continental Army. I pity his misfortunes, detest his trade, and can do nothing for him."

Somerton arose and paced his little tent, in evident perturbation.

"I came not," resumed the lady, "to ask for him life and liberty, though I believe him deserving of both. I would see him."

"Might I without indelicacy ask"—Somerton began, but checked himself for fear of wounding the fair creature before him.

A burning blush mantled her face.

"My name, Colonel Somerton, is Judith Redmond. Deering is a friend—a true friend, I believe—but nothing—nothing more."

"Pardon me, Miss Redmond. It was no vulgar curiosity that prompted me to question you. You shall see the spy," answered the colonel, hurriedly.

"Even a spy may be a man of honor," said the lady, in a faint voice. "Remember young Hale," she added.

"Lady, the allusion is unfortunate," rejoined Somerton, a cloud appearing upon his face.

"He was brave and generous, and died like a hero," she exclaimed.

"He was on the right side," answered the officer, with dignity. "Hale died for his country, but Deering will die for the love of British gold."

"Do not—do not believe it!" cried Miss Redmond, wildly. "God knows his purity of purpose."

"Upon my soul, Miss Redmond, I regret the circumstance that placed him in my power, since it wounds you so deeply. But duty—duty is inexorable."

He stepped hastily to the door, and dispatched a colored servant for Sergeant Giles, but did not dare trust himself to speak further with his lovely visitor.

"Conduct this lady," he said, when the sergeant appeared, "to the prisoner."

"Shall I leave them together?" inquired Giles.

"It is my order."

"How long?" continued the practical sergeant.

Somerton looked inquiringly at the lady.

"A few miserable, miserable moments!" she murmured.

Giles would have continued his interrogatories, had not an imperious gesture from the colonel silenced him. He led the way to the cabin, wondering much that a hiring spy should be honored with such company.

"He's in there, miss," he said, throwing open the door. "It's summat dark, but your bright eyes 'll soon make it light enough. Go straight along and you can't miss him. There's an inner door, ma'am, which opens with a latch. Tom Thornton, push it open for her. Be as expeditious as you can, if it's all the same to ye; for the feller needs a parson more nor he does female company. I wonder," added Giles, thoughtfully, as the second door opened and closed upon the lady, "how long a few 'miserable, miserable moments' may be? Tom, mind your business, and don't be eavesdroppin'. There must be discipline 'mong the dragoons. Stan' up straight, slant your toes outwards, and when you've done your best, do better next time."

Deering heard a light footfall; looked up quickly; then sprang forward and seized the extended hand of the lady.

"This is indeed a sunbeam across my darkened path!" he exclaimed, kneeling and pressing the passive hand again and again to his lips.

"Arise, my friend—arise! Not to me, but to Heaven kneel," she said, with deep emotion.

"Dearest, loveliest, when I kneel to thee, I kneel to Heaven!" answered the spy, in a tone that thrilled to her soul.

"Lift your mind," resumed Miss Redmond, solemnly, "from earthly considerations. Let not my coming divert your thoughts from their proper channel."

"What less earthly than thou can I think of?" said the spy, with enthusiasm. "Angelic goodness prompted this visit. Who but thee would have sought a wretch destined to die on the morrow? Thou hast sweetened my cup of bitterness, till the direful potion of death has lost half its horror."

"How dreadful is your position!" replied Miss Redmond, with mournful vehemence. Alas, Guy, for your memory when all is over! Had you forfeited life in the cause of freedom, this parting would have been less painful; but to go out of the world covered with the ignominy of a British spy, gives me inexpressible pain. O Guy, is there no escape? Have you not some powerful friend in the Continental Army—or is there not some means by which you can scale these wooden walls—elude the sentinels—and leave the gallows behind? If I were a man, I would find some way—hit upon some happy invention—or devise some subtle plan of cheating even Fate itself; if it led to such disgrace. I would move heaven and earth with my endeavors!"

She paused, and pressed her burning forehead with her hand.

"Judith, beloved Judith, you torture me And yet," he added, "it is something to know that I have the sympathy of the best being on earth! I thank thee a thousand times for thy tender pity."

"Strange, incomprehensibly strange, that a soul like thine should spurn the claims of country and patriotism!" said Judith, looking earnestly at the sorrowful face of her lover.

"Mercy, Judith, mercy! Thy words cut like the sabres of Marion's men—ay, deeper; for they reach to the soul itself."

"A British spy!" gasped Judith. "Guy Deering, can this be you?"

There was a world of agony in these utterances. Neither for a time could speak.

"Can I endure this?" muttered the spy, presently. "Shall I go hence and make no sign? I must—I must!"

"Guy Deering, you are struggling with some great secret. Speak it, in Heaven's name! if it will relieve the darkness of your fate and name."

She took his hand, and turned her beautiful face upon him in ineffable entreaty.

"'Tis past, 'tis past!" he murmured, huskily, and with a faint and fading smile. "I am—I am strong again. Now, dearest, talk not

of me, but of thy darling self. If I shake off this outward form of humanity, I will live again in thee. My immortal nature shall find a habitation in the fair temple of thy own spirit, and mysteriously incorporate with thee—become a conscious part of thyself. This is Love—the first, the last, the ethereal, the eternal. Thinkest thou, my own, that death can tear us asunder?"

Deering drew Judith to his breast, and the rays of the setting sun fell upon both. His pale features were lighted with enthusiasm, while hers pictured wonder, fear, and trust.

CHAPTER III.

HIRL, THE HUNCHBACK.

The soft and mellow haze of twilight was descending upon the camp, when the clear challenge of an American sentinel rang out upon the air:

"Who goes there?"

"A friend."

"Stop, friend, and give the countersign."

The person thus challenged was seated in a cart, which was drawn by a sorry-looking horse—the thinness of which seemed to attest to a long penance of fasting. The driver of this animal was far from prepossessing in appearance. He was of large frame, but his figure was rendered disagreeable by a painful stoop and a monstrous protuberance between his shoulders. We cannot describe him better than by simply affirming that he was a hunchback. His face, which otherwise would not have been ugly, was made repulsive by a wound upon the right cheek, imperfectly concealed by a patch. He had apparently passed the prime of life, for long gray hairs fluttered over his forehead. He wore a suit of homespun brown, better adapted for hard service than show. His patriarchal head was protected by a round cloth cap, which bore unmistakable impress of long use.

A large powder-horn and ball-pouch hung under his left arm; while beside him in the cart, braced against the rude seat, was one of those redoubtable weapons denominated the king's-arm.

Instead of stopping his horse when challenged, he jogged on, jerking the reins, and muttering:

"Go 'long, Crazy! go 'long! A'n't afeard o' nothin' you see hereabouts, be ye?"

"Halt!" shouted the sentinel, raising his musket.

"Git out the way, you ragged critter. Don't you know better than to be standin' right in the way of a hoss and cart?" cried the hunchback, petulantly.

"Stop, or I fire!" said the sentinel, warningly.

"Whoa, Crazy, whoa!" said the old man, stopping his bony beast with much tugging and sawing upon the bit. "Don't p'int that gun at me, you reckless devil! Why in the name o' conscience don't you fight the enemy instead o' your friends? Nobody'll come anighst ye bimeby, if you go on in this ry-dicerious way. What in time you want?"

"The countersign, you old fool—the countersign!" roared the sentinel.

"Hey? What? Speak louder, if you want anything. Been deaf these twenty years or up'ards."

The hunchback cocked his head upon one side with that earnest vacuity of expression indicative of the unhappy infirmity which he had avowed.

"You heerd well enough jest now!" snarled the soldier.

"What perduced it, did ye say? God, I s'pose, or it might been nat'ral, leastwise. The old woman says 'twas done by one the Smith gals a singin' treble in my ears when I led the singin'; but that don't look reasonable to me. Washington in the camp?"

The hunchback looked at the sentinel with an air of such perfect simplicity, that he could not refrain from laughing.

"I reckon you know a precious sight about military affairs, old man. Do you s'pose the great Washington goes canterin' about the country like an itinerant parson or a common whipster?"

"They say he's a mighty good fighter, and makes the redcoats run like a flock o' sheep."

"Enough of this, old gentleman! Give me the countersign, or move off."

"My name's Hirl—old Hirl, ill-mannered folks call me."

"Confound him!" muttered the soldier.

"What do I do? Used to be a blacksmith;

am a swordmaker, now. Made quite a lot o' weepens for Marion's men. Cut up old mill-saws and sich. Let me in, will ye? Can't stan' here foolin' much longer."

"I've a mind to fire on the old chatter-box!" said the sentinel, beginning to be angry again.

"Yes, I'm right handy with tools; can put an edge on your sabres that'll cut a hair. Soger-feller, that bagonet o' your'n is blunt as your thumb. How can you stick sich a thing as that into a Britisher? Might as well carry a bean-pole."

Losing all patience, the sentinel strode up to the hunchback, and seizing him by the collar, howled in his ear:

"The password! the password!"

"Why the devil didn't you say so in the first place?" screamed the old man, fretfully. "Come down to bring a few sabres to Washington to hash up the redcoats with. Guess he'd swear some, if he knowed how you'd kept me outside with your imperdence."

"I asked you for the countersign ten minutes ago."

"I hain't got it," and if I had, I wouldn't deliver it to nobody but the ginerel. I ain't a man as seeks arter signs of no kind."

At that juncture, Captain Rainford, who had heard a part of this dialogue, stepped forward and demanded of the proprietor of the horse and cart what he wanted.

"I want to see the officer in command," answered the hunchback, peevishly. "Been bothered here nigh on to half an hour, and I'm sorry to say, mister, that the regerlations here is a disgrace to the Continental Congress. Havin' heerd that there was a great scarcity o' weepens among ye, I jest whipped Crazy into the cart, and hurried right down with a few o' my best razors, that'll shave a Britisher 'thout lather or hot water. Come and look at 'em, sir. Or, perhaps," added the hunchback, reflectively, "you'd better take me right to the ginerel."

Then to the sentinel:

"Watch that cart, there, for you don't seem to have nothin' else to do; though if I's boss here, I'd keep ye a shoulderin', and orderin', and presentin' till you could scarcely stan' on your legs. I shall speak to Washington about the ginerel looseness hereabouts, in p'int o' discipline."

"You've brought us some blades of home manufacture, have you, my good man?" said Rainford, smiling.

"He's brought the High Hills of the Santee on his back, I should think!" muttered the sentinel.

"Yes, major, I've brought ye some good 'uns that I'll warrant to do the business, if properly used." Then to the soldier: "You feller with the musket, you can have the password now, if you want it; though little good it'll do ye, for I's bound to see your commander, anyhow. Marion! there, you hav' it! I hope this'll teach ye to mind your own consarns, and treat the friends o' Congress with respect. Come up, Crazy, come up! Guess, on the whole, we'll take the cart right along, for somebody might steal the razors, you know; and I should be pesky loth to have 'em swingin' on the wrong side, hashin' up our folks 'stead o' the Britishers."

"You are very welcome, my man. Bring your horse and cart inside the lines. What's your name?" said the captain, eyeing his strange visitor with considerable curiosity.

"My name is Hirl, though ill-mannered people call me Old Hirl, Crazy Hirl, Deef Hirl, and so on. You can take your choice, major. In times of peace I was a smith; but now I'm a swordmaker, and can sharpen up your tools to a turn, if you like. Any news stirrin'?"

"Nothing of importance, excepting the capture of a tory spy," replied Rainford, carelessly.

"Come 'long, Crazy! The old gal's gittin' tired. A spy, eh? Well that's good news! You'll string him up right up, I s'pose?" said the hunchback, with a business air.

"He will be executed to-morrow morning."

"This is a nice creetur o' mine, major. You wouldn't think she's 'leven year old now? Fourth o' July?"

The hunchback looked complacently at his meagre mare.

"You're mistaken, my friend; I should think her twenty instead of eleven," replied the captain, shortly.

"You're no judge o' horse-flesh, young

man. What did you say this feller's name is, that's goin' to give a tight-rope performance in the mornin'?"

The man with the hunch on his shoulders gave Crazy a slap across the nose, and watched its effect, while waiting for an answer.

"Deering!" replied Rainford.

"Deering!" exclaimed Hirl, exhibiting much surprise. "Then you have trapped him at last. Poor lad! poor lad! I used to know his father right well; and this boy, too, who was ever a generous and hearty youth. Pity he took to sich courses; but it runs in the blood, I s'pose."

"Do you live in his father's neighborhood?" Rainford inquired.

"Our houses are in sight of each other. 'Twill be a heavy blow to the old gentleman, who hasn't a grain o' sympathy for the Britishers. He'll have a heap o' questions to ask about this poor, misdirected creetur. 'Twouldn't be no more nor a Christian act, I reckon, jest to take a look at him to see how he bears it, and ask if he has any message to send to the old homestead."

The old man looked pensively at the ground. "He has a father and mother?"

"Sartin, sartin—most folks has, I believe. Haven't the matter of a peck of oats, have ye, that I could give Crazy? The old jade has trundled over a good many miles, to-day. By the way, speakin' of this unfortunat youngster, I r'ally think it's my duty to see him, though it'll harry up my feelin's woundedly."

Hirl spoke in a tone that carried conviction to the mind of Rainford.

"If such are your feelings," he said, "I will mention the subject to Col. Somerton, who will readily give you access to the prisoner."

"Thankee; though the job isn't to be coveted. These sabres that I brought down you shall be welcome to, jest for the sake o' liberty; and they may be the means of makin' a market for more. If your bagonets or swords want sharpenin', John Hirl is the man to do it, although he's rather skeery 'bout takin' Continental money as times are; for Congress is poor as Job, and there's no hard money in the country."

While the hunchback was talking, Rainford was examining the weapons which he had brought in his cart. They were not elegant in form, nor cunningly polished; but they seemed rightly attuned, and were ground to a keen edge.

"In a strong hand," said the captain, "these blades will do fearful execution. My friend, your offering is very acceptable; for some of our poor fellows are but indifferently armed. You could not have brought a more welcome gift. Sergeant Giles," he added, raising his voice, "carry these weapons to the colonel's quarters. Here is Somerton himself. Colonel, this worthy countryman has brought a timely supply of trustworthy blades. Our dragoons will make terrible work with them, if you will give us a chance at the enemy."

Somerton took one of the sabres from the cart, and, approaching a camp-fire, examined its workmanship, and balanced it in his hand. He then turned to the sword-maker, looking him over with a searching eye. The somewhat pale and disfigured countenance, and the stooped figure, passed a critical ordeal before the colonel withdrew his regards.

"So you forged these weapons, old man?" he said, at length.

"My name is Hirl," said the hunchback, in a shrieking voice. "It is Hirl, rightfully; but ill-mannered people have shortened it, callin' me Hirl—Old Hirl, or af Hirl, and lastly, Crazy Hirl."

"Speak loud, Somerton; the old fellow is rather deaf," suggested Rainford.

"Speak in my left ear if you want me to hear; for that's the most active of the two. The doctors say the drum of the right ear is mightily out o' repair. Been dreadfully 'flicted, off an' on. It's bad enough to be hard o' hearin'; but I've had the rheumatics in my jint, the neuralgic in my face, and the browncreeturs in my throat pooty much the most o' the time since the breakin' out o' the war."

"You seem to have an ugly wound on your right cheek," observed Somerton, mindful of the man's infirmity.

"Yes; got that in a bit of a scrimmage with a gang o' Tories up to our place t'other day. My wife said if the creetur'd struck hard enough, 'twould be nighabout the instigation of my life. They tell me, colonel,

that you've ketched Deerin' at last. His folks live clost to my house, and I jist telled the major here—"

"I'm a captain of dragoons," said Rainford dryly.

"That I's afraid I should have to go an see him. His father is a staunch Continent' Congress man."

"His father a patriot! Can it be possible?" exclaimed Somerton. "There will be grief for him to-morrow night. Unhappy father! —unhappy son!"

Somerton spoke with an earnestness that testified to his kindly sympathies.

Then in a lower voice, to Rainford:

"Captain, it is a painful duty that devolves on us; but we will execute it faithfully, according to the usages of war."

"Our country demands it of us. It will be no more than an act of common humanity to allow this worthy, though simple-minded man to see him," returned Rainford.

"We sometimes have the most to apprehend from simple-minded men; although, in this case, I confess I can see nothing but apparent honesty and singleness of purpose," answered Somerton, again scrutinizing the hunchback, who now stood warming his hands over the fire, after the manner of old persons whose blood begins to flow tardily through the shrunken veins.

"It's a stout arm," mused the colonel, "for an old man; but I suppose those swelling muscles come of his trade. What a mountain he carries on his back! Where's Sergeant Giles?"

"Here, your honor!" answered that individual.

"Prompt as a cannon-ball," laughed Somerton.

"Am allers on hand, like shop-worn goods," said Giles.

"You see this old gentleman?"

"With a bomb-shell atween his shoulders?" If I couldn't see him, I shouldn't be able to see the Hills of Santee in a shiny day! With your honor's permission, he don't know much of the art of war, havin' throwed up his fortifications ahind instead of afore."

Honest Giles touched his cap, and stood straight as a hickory sapling.

"His name is Hirl; and he has permission to see the spy. You have charge of the prisoner to-night. Be careful that the same man comes out of the cabin that goes in. I have not the faintest suspicion of the honesty of this garrulous old man; but it is a good plan, Sergeant Giles, to deal with an honest man as you would with a rogue."

"The man that thinks to deceive Jim Giles, your honor, brings his sack to the wrong mill. I have a saddle to fit every horse, and he's a knowin' beast that gives me a fall. Come, Harry, or Old Harry, to the right face—march!"

"Follow the sergeant," said Rainford. "He will provide you with food and quarters till to-morrow, if you are disposed to pass the night in camp."

"Bleeged to ye, cap'n! Will talk with ye more 'bout the weopons, presently."

With this reply, the hunchback went shuffling after the martial steps of the sergeant. They saw a female gliding from the cabin as they approached it. She moved away swiftly, and her graceful form was soon lost in the obscurity.

"How now, sergeant?" said Tom Thornton, as Giles appeared in the narrow entry of the cabin. "You've brought a different grist to our hopper this time. We don't object to anything in the woman line; but such a nightmare as this will afflict the prisoner afore his time."

"The duty of a soldier and officer is to obey orders," quoth Giles, with not a little dignity. "Tom Thornton, face to this mountain of a man; Old Harry, face to Tom Thornton. Now, Tom, it's expected that the same one'll come out as goes in. Observe the critter well, so there'll be no mistake. If the spy should give us the slip, we should be disgraced forever and a day."

"I've got eyes as well as another; and he is blind indeed who don't know a sheep from a swine!" Then, to Hirl: "Friend, you carry a heavy pack. Pass in, in God's name; for it's my opinion that the sight of ye will do more to reconcile the spy to death than anything else."

Thornton lifted the latch, pushed open the door with his foot, and the hunchback went in.

The former heard two voices a long time as he moved slowly to and fro in the little entry, both being different in volume and character, and easily distinguishable.

When the old man at length appeared, his air was absent, and he kept shaking his head like one in doubt. The spy himself attended him to the door, and said: "Good-night."

Thornton looked at the hunchback a moment, made an affirmative motion of the head, and let him out.

"You've had a long chat, Old Harry," said Sergeant Giles, who was waiting him outside.

"My name is Hirl, or more properly Hirlley; though ill-mannered people call—"

"Never mind the ill-mannered people!" interrupted Giles, impatiently. "Tell me how you found the prisoner?"

"Rather melancholy, and down at the heel. I don't think he wants to be hung at all, not a bit on't. He don't look as I expected in the least. It don't seem possible that he's old Mark Deerin's son, and I'd oughter know him as well as anybody. But then boys grow out of one's mem'ry very quick. No possibility o' mistake—is there, corporil?"

The hunchback applied the digits of his right hand to his head in a perplexed and reflective manner.

"Mistake? The matter's as plain as the pack on your back!"

"I don't know—I don't know; but I s'pose you do. He wasn't so glad to see me as I thought he'd be; and, to tell the truth, wasn't inclined to acknowledge the 'quaintance at fust. I've got to think about this a spell afore I can make head or tail on't."

"He has wit enough to deceive a dozen like you," affirmed Giles. "He that travels far knows much."

"Stay in camp? 'Bleeged to ye; but arter seein' this boy, I ha'n't got much appetite for't. I'll take Crazy, and jog to the nearest farm-house, and call round ag'in some other time to sharpen up your tools. The kurnil's welcome to the sabres. If 'twasn't for the rheumatics, I'd stay and help use 'em; but I'm a gittin' too old for a soger. You see, a man o' my age hasn't much to fight for—for I can't stan' it a great many years, in the course o' natur'. Whoa, Crazy! The old gal had the scratches last fall, but she's got nighabout shut of 'em now. Jes' slip the bridle into her mouth, corporil. Apt to cast her bridle when I leave her by herself, Crazy is."

The hunchback clambered into his cart, and was tugging at the reins, in an endeavor to turn, when Captain Rainford passed, in the performance of some official duty about camp. He made a momentary halt, and said:

"So you leave to-night?"

"Yes; I'm deaf as a haddock in the right, but I can hear pooty well with the left," screamed Hirl, whose unfortunate ear continually involved him in misapprehensions.

"Did you see the girl?" asked Somerton in a voice loud enough to be heard on parade.

"Yes, Hirl; though ill-mannered people—"

"Confound the fellow!" muttered Somerton; while Rainford interrupted the hunchback with:

"Pshaw, old gentleman! You have a marvelous faculty of perverting everything. The colonel wishes to know if you saw the young lady?"

"Yes, I saw him; but don't ask me no questions—for the poor lad has kind o' bewildered me, as 'twere. I don't know what to say, I'm sure. One thing's sartin, he's give me a powerful melancholy. I a'n't fit for a soger; for I'm too tender-hearted to string up a feller creetur as if he was a dog, and nothin' better. Good night, kurnil: good night, corporil."

"Is the prisoner calm? Does he bear his fate like a man?" inquired Somerton, with much earnestness.

"He's calmer nor he'd oughter be, I should say; a pesky sight quieter nor many that has less on their minds," replied Hirl.

"Does he exhibit no remorse—no despair?"

"Yes, she's a good mare, 'leven year next spring. Can trot her three mile an' hour 'thout wettin' a hair. Go 'long, Crazy! I stan' a smart chance o' gettin' the rheumatics being out so late. Get up, old gal!"

The hunchback see-sawed the bits across the lank jaws of his mare, the wheels began to turn, and he lumbered away—musket, powder-horn, deafness, pack, and all.

CHAPTER IV.

IN WHICH THE SPY DENIES HIS IDENTITY.

"Come with me, Captain Rainford," said Somerton, a few minutes after the departure of the sabre-maker.

"If you propose visiting the spy," replied Rainford, with hesitation, "I hope you won't insist on my company."

"It is my wish!" returned Somerton, briefly.

When the two Continental officers entered the cabin, they found the prisoner sitting abstractedly near the barred window, at the extreme end of the little compartment. A single candle burned dimly on the deal-table, casting a faint and flickering light upon the person of the spy, who received his visitors with a faint smile, saying:

"Excuse my rising, gentlemen; ceremony is unnecessary here."

"Our visit," answered Somerton, "is one of humanity. We have our orders from the chief in command, but we desire to be just as well as prompt."

"Be seated, gentlemen, if you can find the conveniences for so doing. My accommodations are not of the best," said the prisoner, with slight bitterness of manner.

"Our errand is not to remove any feeling of doubt in our minds in regard to your identity, or your guilt," resumed Somerton, in a calm and serious voice, drawing pencil and paper from his pocket, and approaching the table.

"Ah! This is a kind of informal examination," said the spy, arising and composedly snuffing the candle. "I would offer you additional light, but none know better than yourselves that I am but a passive agent here."

"You do not deny, sir, that your name is Deering?" continued the colonel, preparing to write.

"I beg leave to correct you. My name is not Deering," answered the prisoner, quietly.

"I advise you, young man, not to trifle with one whose only regret is, that you are not innocent," returned Somerton, reprovingly.

"The person who informed you that my name is the one you have mentioned, was mistaken," answered the spy, firmly.

"It was yourself that told me you were called Deering," added the colonel, with a frown of displeasure.

"Never!" exclaimed the accused.

"I assure you, unfortunate man, that you will gain nothing by subterfuge so shallow!" retorted Somerton, with earnestness, but without anger.

"No man that knows me, can truly say that I ever resorted to dishonorable subterfuge."

The spy was standing within a yard of Somerton, perfectly calm and collected, without bravado, or an apparent purpose of contradiction.

"Do you deliberately deny that you acknowledged your name to be Deering?" demanded Somerton, in a voice that was every moment growing sterner.

"I do!" was the unhesitating reply.

"You see," interposed Rainford, querulously, "that your sympathies for this person are wasted. He disputes a most obvious fact. He will next deny that he was chased by our dragoons, swam a river, and was caught by you."

"If Captain Rainford puts his statement in the form of assertion, I do emphatically deny it," answered the spy, with an unpretentious positiveness quite surprising and baffling to his examiners.

"It is folly to pursue this investigation further," muttered Rainford.

"These are audacious and unwise denials," said Somerton, with a sharper tone of rebuke. "What is the name of the lady who visited you about an hour since?"

"No lady has honored me with her presence to-night," was the prompt response.

"Too cool! too cool!" cried Rainford, laughing.

Somerton was annoyed, vexed, disappointed. Repressing the hasty words that were ready to fly to his lips, he went on.

"Prisoner, what is your name?"

"Max Henderson," answered the spy.

Colonel Somerton took the candle from the table, and held it near the prisoner's face, which he examined with the closest attention. This scrutiny he extended to his person generally.

"There can be no mistake, Rainford," he said. "This is the same man we captured! His garments are still wet."

"There is not a reasonable doubt of it," replied Rainford.

"If you are not the person that we take you to be, how came you to be an occupant of this cabin?" interrogated Somerton.

"I will not answer that question," was the unsatisfactory reply.

"The voice, the height, the features, are the same," muttered the colonel. "This seems one of those cases where deception is out of the question."

"And yet," said the spy, "you are not satisfied. You detect, you sense, you feel something; it is not a certainty, it does not reach to the height of suspicion—but you are uneasy."

"Misguided man! Falsehood will not avail you; on the contrary, it destroys that sympathy which otherwise your fate might have drawn forth. Despicable as I know your employment to be, I confess that I am unpleasantly disappointed in your character. Your assertions are puerile, absurd; and when your position is considered, almost shocking," added Somerton, who could not conceal his contempt.

"You intend to put me to death?"

The spy looked steadily at the officer, who answered:

"You will be executed to-morrow morning at nine o'clock."

"In your report of this transaction, whose name will appear as having suffered the extreme penalty of military law?"

The query was put gravely, and with becoming impressiveness.

"The name of Guy Deering, the British spy!" replied the colonel, again passing the candle before the face of the prisoner.

"I trust, before the hour you have mentioned, that it will be proved I am not Guy Deering."

"Banish the thought! It is impossible. As a Christian and a man, I would press upon you the necessity of preparation for a journey so long."

"Colonel Somerton," replied the prisoner, "I cordially thank you for your kindness. If you could think better of me—if it were possible for you to look with less aversion upon one who has never injured you—"

"Injured me!" cried the colonel. "You have injured every honest man in the Colonies! One more question. Have you not frequently, persistently, carried intelligence from the American lines to the enemy?"

The man who called himself Max Henderson grew palpably pale. A storm seemed to sweep over his broad chest, agitating it like a sea. He turned from Somerton, and took several hasty turns across the room.

"If guilty or innocent of this charge," he asked, huskily, "would not my answer be the same?"

"True! true!" responded Somerton, struck by the candor of the reply.

"Come life or death, ignominy or escape, you can know no more of me than now. There is a seal on my lips that only One can remove; it will remain, whatever may happen. In this world, Max Henderson expects no justice. But go, gentlemen—go! If I bring no proof of my identity, my blood will rest upon you. Let God judge between us in the day when he shall make up His eternal awards."

"God and the Continental Congress!" said Rainford, by way of amendment.

"Your language, sir, is strange and contradictory," added Somerton. "I honor honest boldness, even in an enemy; but abhor falsehood as much as I love truth."

The grating of a saw and the strokes of a hammer crept with a muffled sound through the walls of the cabin. The spy fixed his dark, searching eyes on Somerton.

"The preliminaries of death," he said, "follow fast on the heels of your examination."

A bitter smile swept over the prisoner's pale lips.

The colonel colored, and exhibited confusion.

"Your generosity," resumed the spy, "might have permitted me a few hours for repose, uninterrupted by those dire notes of preparation, without stain upon your patriotism."

"Repose, indeed! Innocence itself could not sleep in a situation so awful!"

Somerton spoke with the solemnity he

really felt; while the prisoner's handsome face lighted with some inexplicable emotion. The wonder and bewilderment of the colonel increased, communicating corresponding feelings to the practical Rainford.

"We gain nothing," said the latter; "and the interview is becoming uncomfortable."

"Good night, gentlemen! We shall meet again in the morning," said the prisoner, with his peculiar look and smile.

"Whoever you are, I am sorry for you," answered Somerton, slowly following Rainford from the cabin.

Sergeant Giles was standing near the door.

"Sergeant," the colonel began, "you saw the hunchback—"

He suddenly checked himself, adding, in a lower voice:

"Pshaw! what nonsense! There can be no mistake. 'Tis the last trick of a gamester who plays for life. Drowning men catch at straws."

As the officer walked away, he was followed by the dissonance of the saw, and the dull sound of the hammer. He turned and beheld, with an involuntary shiver, men raising two posts with a transverse beam. He hurried to his quarters; but could still see, in imagination, the skeleton frame looming grim in the moonlight.

"He that takes the devil into his boat must ferry him across," quoth Sergeant Giles.

CHAPTER V.

THE EXECUTION.

Day dawned, and the Continental camp shook off its slumbers. There was a stir among officers and men. Somerton looked wearily from his tent. He had passed a troubled night. When, after tossing a long time, he finally fell asleep, his repose was disturbed by the same train of thought that had kept him wakeful. He dreamed of his prisoner, the young woman who had visited him, and Old Hirl, the hunchback.

The colonel arose, depressed by a heavy consciousness of the disagreeable duty which the day would bring. Leaving his quarters, he took a solitary walk around the outposts of the little camp, still pursued by thoughts of Guy Deering, and the contradictory character of his last interview with that misguided person. As he slowly returned, he was met by Rainford.

"I wait your orders, colonel," he said briefly.

"There is no need of haste. Let him have as much time as possible," Somerton replied.

"That was not thought of by our enemies when Hale ascended the cart," returned Rainford.

"To their shame be it spoken!" exclaimed Somerton. Then, after a pause: "Have you seen him this morning?"

"I just looked in to see if he was there."

"How did he appear? Was he less contradictory than last night?"

"The same! the same! There was no change in his deportment."

"I regret it! I hoped that solitude and reflection would bring him to reason."

"On the contrary, he was firmer in his incredible assertions than before. I really believe he thinks to escape, even at this late hour. Truly, his composure is incomprehensible."

"Possibly," said Somerton, "it may arise from a mistaken notion of duty."

"That is quite probable; for the greatest criminals have sometimes been the wildest fanatics, dying—as they imagine—martyrs to right."

"Go and ask him," continued the colonel, thoughtfully, "if he wishes the consolations of religion."

"The very question I proposed. He laid his hand upon his breast, and replied that he already experienced such consolation within him."

"It is passing strange! Send Sergeant Giles to inform him that he has but an hour to live."

The sergeant being near, was immediately dispatched on this errand, which he fulfilled with all that military alacrity on which he prided himself.

"Well?" said Somerton, interrogatively, glancing at his messenger.

"He said," replied Giles, "that it was more time than he expected; and he hoped it would be more than sufficient to prove his innocence."

Captain Rainford, never celebrated for his gentleness, on hearing this, made use of sundry expletives bordering on profanity. Even the patient Somerton seemed annoyed by this reply.

"Did he express any desire to see a clergyman?" that officer demanded.

"When I ventured to hint, your honor, that he ought to have a parson to tinker up his conscience, he shook his head with a solemn sort o' smile, and said: 'If I've neglected my soul till now, it's sartainly too late to save it; but if I've attended to it, it will not be deserted at the hour o' death.' There was his words, and every one of 'em seemed to weigh the matter of a pound."

"I have done my duty!" exclaimed Somerton. "Captain Rainford, muster the dragoons. An hour is the utmost grace that can be given. If Tarleton should get wind of what is going on, it wouldn't be strange if he should attempt to rescue. He and Cornwallis have been closeted more than once with Guy Deering, no doubt."

Soon the blast of a bugle was heard, followed by the clanking of sabres, the rattling of spurs, the neighing of horses, and the heavy tramp of dragoons. A part of the brigade was drawn up in the form of a hollow square around the gallows that had been erected the previous night. Inside this phalanx, a corresponding number of more lightly armed troopers were paraded on foot. All being ready for the terrible drama, a deep and expectant silence ensued.

Presently, Sergeant Giles entered the cabin with a file of men, and brought out the prisoner, upon whom every eye was instantly turned. His face was somewhat flushed when he first appeared, but it soon became pale and calm. He advanced firmly and stood in the fatal square, when he paused, and looked slowly around. His glance rested upon Somerton.

"Tell Colonel Somerton," he said, "that I would speak with him a moment."

His desire was at once made known to the commanding officer, who reluctantly approached.

"Mr. Deering," he said, "I have been informed that you have something to say to me."

"Much! much!" answered the prisoner, with emphasis.

"Say on, then, for the time is brief," said the officer.

"Brief, indeed!" said the spy, quickly. "It would seem that there is but a short quarter of an hour before me. Although yonder orb (he pointed to the sun) 'will rise and set millions of times, I shall not see it set or rise again. How should you feel, colonel, in my situation?"

"If," returned Somerton, earnestly, "I were dying in my country's cause, with no stain on my name, I should feel that the smile of God was on me."

"I comprehend," said the prisoner, coloring.

"Mr. Deering—" the colonel began.

"I have told you that my name is Henderson," interrupted the spy, in a decisive voice.

"Henderson or Deering—for it makes little difference what I call you—if you have aught to communicate, come to the point and be brief. I am disposed to be humane; but with me duty is imperative."

Before answering, the prisoner partially turned, and looked anxiously toward the Santee, the murmur of whose waters could be heard. Somerton noticed the action, and said, warningly:

"Young man, I solemnly believe that you are beyond human aid. If Tarleton and his legion were to appear this moment, you could not be rescued alive. A volley from my men would end all before the foremost of our enemies could come to the charge."

"I do not expect Tarleton," responded the prisoner, with a smile that seemed a mockery of death.

"Do I understand that you have spoken what you wish to say?" demanded the Continental officer, authoritatively.

"No, no!" exclaimed the spy, with a vehemence that was in striking contrast to his former quietness.

"In Heaven's name speak, then, for the time draws near!"

"God forbid! Never, never!" he cried, with more feeling than he had yet exhibited.

"Your terrible situation has disordered

your mind," replied Somerton, in a troubled voice.

"It may so appear to you; but possibly the time may come—"

He stopped, and looked once more to the south.

"Some false and deceptive hope still supports you. Reject it—abandon it—fling it from you as the enemy of your future peace. Employ the few remaining moments in prayer. Yonder is the chaplain of the brigade; he looks anxiously this way. Permit me to summon him. He waits but for a signal, and I will give it."

The colonel waved his hand, and the individual referred to quickly approached. In person and outward appearance, he bore small resemblance to one's idea of a man of God. He was a large, wiry-looking personage, with brawny hands, thick neck, and swarthy features, which, instead of that softness and meekness generally supposed to characterize his profession, were hard and severe in their expression. Instead of prayer-book or missal, he carried a ponderous sword, and wore beneath a leather belt a brace of pistols.

The prisoner regarded him with a faint smile, and was about to refuse his services, when some new thought changed his purpose.

"Humphrey," said Somerton, "but a few moments are left to this wretched man. Do for him what man may do for his fellow-man in a strait like this."

"I can do nothing of myself," answered the chaplain; "but if the Lord blesses and directs my efforts, his mind may yet be fixed on that which concerns him most." Then to the prisoner: "The crime for which you are to suffer is truly heinous, but the mercy of God can reach the vilest creatures."

"This is comfort, indeed!" retorted the spy, bitterly.

"You are justly doomed to death," continued Parson Humphrey, sternly; "yet late repentance is better than none."

"Leave me, worthy man; this matter is to be settled between Heaven and myself. No doubt thou art honest, but thou canst do me no good."

"But I can direct thee to One who can, even He who fashioneth one vessel to honor and another to dishonor. Improve these precious moments in prayer and supplication; for perchance the divine ear may not yet be closed against thee, having had mercy on the penitent thief in the very moment of his mortal agony, which fact—"

"Am I a thief!" said the prisoner, reddening.

"As Paul said, I judge no man—"

"Was it Paul?" muttered the prisoner, with a perceptible show of impatience.

Somerton bit his lips, and backed his horse a little from the parties.

"Nay, if thou art captious, I can do nothing for thee; for a perverse spirit will become thy condition, seeing that the word of life would but go in at one ear and out at the other—being as water spilled on the ground or pearls cast before dumb swine. Thou hast much to do, and but short space in which to do it; therefore, fall upon thy knees, and, though I detest thy calling, and British gold hath a stinking savor in my nostrils, I will put up such petition as an ignorant and sinful man may for a lost and dying brother."

"I thank you, worthy sir," returned the prisoner, casting another of those anxious glances toward the strip of open country that bordered the Santee. "If thou wilt speak to me of thy doctrines, I will patiently hear what thou hast to offer, though thy appearance is more like that of a temporal soldier than a champion of the Cross."

The spy spoke with calmness; but there was evident uneasiness in his manner, and the perspiration was exuding in a fine moisture from his face.

The Continental colonel, despite his disinclination to do so, could not but observe him with painful attention, secretly wishing that he was far away in the discharge of more grateful duties. To him, time never passed more quickly. He beheld the sands running rapidly, and the fatal moment approaching. The stern, un pitying countenance of Parson Humphrey did not please him—adding much to the uncomfortable feelings that oppressed him.

"My doctrines are those of the patriarchs and the apostles, of the saints, and of the fathers, and the holy martyrs, and the Conti-

mental Congress, and George Washington, and all good patriots, and the thirteen colonies, and every other Protestant country."

"George Washington!" muttered the spy. "A good man—a good man!"

"Ay, and the leader of the armies of the Continental Israel. As Paul said—"

"The Captain of our salvation did not wear the sword," said the prisoner, abruptly.

"Had it been the will of God and Congress, he would have carried both sword and spear, I doubt not."

"Alas!" cried Deering, "neither Congress nor Washington will save me."

"Nor would I, had I the powers of both!" retorted Humphrey, harshly. "Give good heed to what I say. Thou observest me not, but continually turnest thine eyes to yonder clearing, as if hoping for aid from that quarter."

"Time is up!" said Captain Rainford. "Sergeant Giles, attend to your duty."

A sickly pallor overspread Deering's features.

"If thou wouldst indeed serve me," he said, in a low voice to Humphrey, "delay the execution as long as possible."

"My authority," answered Humphrey, with unchanging severity, "is not temporal, but spiritual. And if it were, why should I delay the footsteps of justice?"

"I ask," returned the spy, "but ten paltry minutes!"

"Those minutes are God's, and He can give or withhold them."

"To me," added the prisoner, earnestly, "ten minutes are worth ten worlds! Nay, I will abate the time one-half—grant me five!"

"Were it for the good of thy soul, they request might perhaps avail; but thou givest no evidence of repentance, and thy urgency ariseth from a natural shrinking from death."

"Thou doest me injustice; I swear to thee thou dost! I can die as well as thou. There has been a fatal error, which a short delay may correct."

"Wretched man, I fear thy whole life has been a fatal error; but as mercy is the duty of a Christian, I will speak to Colonel Somerton, in thy behalf," said the chaplain.

"Leave me!" he exclaimed. "Thy heart has never been touched by human sympathy."

A soldier advanced and tied the prisoner's hands behind him.

"Colonel Somerton," said Humphrey, "allow the prisoner a few moments for prayer."

The officer made an affirmative motion of the head. The chaplain drew close to Deering, saying:

"Fall back, men—fall back a little. This unhappy man would perform his last act of devotion undisturbed."

Sergeant Giles and his men respectfully retired a few steps.

"Kneel—kneel!" whispered the chaplain, and Deering knelt with his strange spiritual adviser. The latter raised his hands in the attitude of prayer, and began his pious petition. His low-breathed and earnest supplications were continued some time, and when he seemed drawing to a close, Deering whispered:

"Pray on, pray on! Thou mayest, perchance, bring me salvation in more ways than one."

The chaplain prolonged his invocation.

"The parson is long at his prayers," muttered Rainford. "He makes this scene unnecessarily tedious."

"It is little that we give him," answered Somerton, looking at the prisoner; "but it is much that we take. If Humphrey's harsh surgery can help him any, I do not mind waiting a little."

"By Heavens! the parson has ceased, and the spy has taken up the strain!" exclaimed the captain.

This was true; for the instant Humphrey pronounced the closing word Amen, Deering bowed his head reverently, and said:

"Good sir, thou art more kind than I thought thee. Now I will ask mercy for myself; and, while I supplicate the divine favor, do thou cast thine eyes occasionally toward the Santee, and listen with all the intensity of thy senses."

The tableaux was now deeply impressive: The men on horseback and on foot; the gallows in the centre; Somerton and Rainford sitting like statues upon their horses. Deering on his knees, with hands secured behind

him, and the stony figure of Humphrey beside him, with the sun streaming radiantly over all.

"He is long-winded," said the impatient Rainford, at length. "It is but a pretext to gain time. He has not the courage to walk up and die like a man."

The words of the captain, though spoken in a low tone, reached the ears of Deering, who sprang quickly to his feet. He turned with flashing eyes to give a haughty reply; but changed his purpose with manifest effort. He breathed hard, and his chest heaved.

"Prisoner," said Colonel Somerton, "we have granted you every grace that Christian men can give." Then to Sergeant Giles: "Let the execution proceed."

"I will remember it, colonel," answered Deering, impressively.

"Not long—not long!" muttered Giles, "for one's memory is dull after being hanged. There is neither device nor wisdom in the grave."

Deering leaned upon the chaplain, and walked slowly to the gallows; but his eyes wandered with inexpressible earnestness toward the Santee. Bending to the ear of his ghostly adviser, he whispered:

"I heard the tramp of a horse's feet."

"Nay, it was an illusion of the evil one to divert thy mind from that which concerns thy everlasting salvation. Fight against it, unhappy man," replied Humphrey, in those cold, severe tones that characterized his ministry.

"I hear it again. It is thou who art deceived."

The spy now stood at the foot of the gallows; the fatal rope oscillated in the air over his head. A dragoon seized it to adjust it about the prisoner's neck, but he recoiled from the contact with infinite disgust.

"It is not for me!" he cried, with a glance like lightning at the offender. "I was not born to such infamy."

There was a stir and murmur among the dragoons.

"A horseman! a horseman!—a messenger! a messenger!" ran from mouth to mouth. Every eye was turned expectantly to the Santee, and fixed upon a horse and rider. The person of the latter was thrown forward in the saddle, as if impatient of his progress, while his steed was covered with sweat, and cast the foam in white flakes from his mouth. The generous beast shot forward like an arrow, and, thundering up to the dragoons, staggered and fell.

"Hold there! hold, in God's name!" shouted the messenger, disengaging himself from the stirrups, and waving a letter over his head.

"Here is one officer in command," said Rainford. "What has happened? Make known your business."

"There has been a mistake. This letter will explain all. It is for Colonel Somerton," answered the messenger, panting like a dog wearied in the chase.

Somerton took the letter from the unsteady hand that proffered it, and broke the seal. It read:

"MY DEAR COLONEL. Stay the execution of the person now in your custody. You labor under a singular misapprehension in regard to his identity. Guy Deering, the British spy, was seen this morning by me and several of my officers at my present headquarters at Black Swamp. There was no mistake respecting his personality—having had a full view of him for some minutes. I ordered six of my most experienced scouts to pursue and take him. He permitted them to approach almost within pistol-shot, when, waving his hand derisively, he plunged into the forest, and was soon lost sight of. On the spot where he had stood, a paper was found, on which was written in pencil: 'Colonel Tarleton is coming to take the Swamp Fox.' This announcement struck me as being very singular; but it was doubtless a piece of bravado on his part—for you know that those who have not the power of injuring us frequently resort to threats for indemnity. The person of Deering is well known to at least twenty men in my brigade; and very nearly that number are ready to swear to his identity—as I am myself. So you perceive, my dear colonel, that it would not be just to execute your prisoner without further investigation. Keep him, therefore, in custody until his guilt or innocence shall be more fully established."

"You had better break up your camp and move farther up the Santee, where roving bands of Tories are committing every species of outrage upon the defenceless inhabitants."

P. S.—An eccentric old hunchback has recently supplied me with some excellent swords, of which I stood greatly in need. I can commend his workmanship.

"Stop the execution! Remand the prisoner, and place a guard over him!" cried Somerton, after reading this missive.

It was observed by Sergeant Giles that this

order was given with much promptness and heartiness, as if that officer was performing a pleasing duty.

The man whose identity was involved in such doubt glanced at Captain Rainford with a quiet smile of triumph, and marched silently back to the cabin, in charge of the sergeant.

The dragoons looked at each other in mute bewilderment—none knowing definitely what had happened to change the course of events, and produce this unexpected reprieve. Somerton and Rainford retired slowly from the ground, in a state of doubt and uncertainty quite as perplexing as that which prevailed among the privates.

CHAPTER VI.

GOODY GRINDLE.

"Go 'long, Crazy! go 'long!"

"Here comes the swordmaker of the Santee," said Sergeant Giles, looking up. "A strange old body is he. He carries his forge on his back."

"Perhaps it's a powder magazine; it's large enough at any rate," responded Tom Thornton.

"Git up, I say! What you creepin' along that way for? Come, creetur, come!"

The swordmaker tugged at the reins, and see-sawed the bits; and having already passed the guards, trundled up to the spot where the sergeant and Tom Thornton were standing. The former, being mischievously inclined and something of a wag, said to the latter:

"See how I'll quiz this honest old feller." Then to the hunchback, who was dismounting from his cart, slowly and clumsily. "Heard the news, mister?"

"Can I make shoes? No, it isn't my business. Make 'em for Crazy; but couldn't do it for the whole brigade, 'tisn't likely," answered Hirl in a screeching voice.

"I say, have you heard the news?" shouted Giles.

"Don't hear much of anything. Don't speak in a whisper when you talk with me. The left ear's well 'nough, far as I know; but the right one is all tore to bits, as 'twere, by troubles, and t'ials, and exposure to heat, and cold, and hard work, and a scoldin' wife, and one thing and another. What's happened, eh?"

"General Washington's surrendered; and the Britishers are going to put him into an iron cage, and carry him to England. Goin' to be terrible times here, I reckon. The country'll be swept by sword and bagonet!"

"A little louder, mister. What's the good o' mutterin' down in your throat arter that fashion? Can't you remember my infirmity from one minute to another?" said Hirl, peevishly, beginning to detach Crazy from the cart.

"Don't want me to yell myself to death, do ye? I say Washington's been taken, and liberty's gone to the dogs, and the Continental Congress has been surprised and bagoneted. We shall all be cut up finer'n smokin' tobacco. You'll probably be hashed with one o' your own swords. The best thing you can do, is to hitch up your old hoss, and drive as far as ever you can, without stoppin'!"

"Heard about that airy this mornin', didn't surprise me an atom. I've got later news than that. The general's escaped, and a new Congress is in session. Come down to-day to sharpen ye up a trifle. Got all my tools in my cart—anvil, bellows, charcoal, hammers, tongs, and sich. Jest send round and tell the men to bring in their battered weapons, and I'll put 'em in such trim as they never was afore. Step up, Crazy, step up! You move as if you's fifteen year old, 'stead o' 'leven."

The old man pulled his mare from the shafts, and relieved it of the patched and worn harness.

"Nice animil to ride on parade!" said Giles.

"No, I ha'n't got one made," replied Hirl, in the most innocent and unconscious manner.

"I remarked that it was a fine dragoon horse! Them ere bones would do tremenjous execution among the inemy, if you should rush the critter right into the ranks."

"Jes' so. I don't like mischevious pranks. My real name is Hirlley—cut down to Hirl for short—but ill-mannered people call me Old Hirl, Deef Hirl, Crazy Hirl, and sich. Howsomnever, that don't disturb me. I go in for

Washington and the Continental Congress, make swords, sharpen the weepens of the fightin' fellers, and mind my own business. If I hadn't the neuralagy the rheumatics, and other eperdemics, I'd go right into the ranks myself, and cut my bigness through, if it cost me a fit o' sickness. I would, by Satan! The fact is," added the old man, flourishing his cart-whip spasmodically over his head, "these ere rotten Britishers are gittin' too rampaginous and opstripulous to live with in any kind o' decency; and the bloody Tories are ten times worse nor they be. If I's on'y a young man, or if the onnatural eperdemics would let up a little, I'd carve my name on the eagle o' liberty, or worry myself into a fever in the attempt."

Having ended this determined speech, the swordmaker drew a halter from among the varieties of his cart, and fastened his horse to a corner of the cabin in which the spy was confined.

"That's a brave speech," quoth Sergeant Giles; "but," he added—pointing to the old man's back—"you carry too much weight for a soldier, who dislikes to go into battle with more than a day's rations."

"Make not light of my infarmities!" retorted the hunchback, with a quick and—Thornton thought—menacing look at Giles. "The old and feeble have enough to bear, without the gibes of the young and ill-mannered. But levity, I s'pose, is nateral to youth. Look at this arm, will ye?"

The swordmaker held up a brawny arm.

"This member," he went on, "is fastened to an old trunk that's been afflicted with neuralagy and rheumatics; but there's a powerful sight o' strength in it yet."

It would seem that Giles was of the same opinion, for he prudently placed two paces between himself and the swordmaker.

"I remember once, when a lad," resumed Hirl, "in the playfulness of my strength, I seized a lubberly feller, a head taller than myself, in this way"—the swordmaker grasped the sergeant by the arm with an earnestness that was far from pleasant, judging by the expression of Giles—"and," continued the narrator, "shook him in this manner; and not content with this, in mere bravado, gave him several lusty thwacks with a stick; the same as if I should lay on to ye with my cart-whip arter this fashion."

The eccentric old man suited the action to the description, and the sergeant, soldier as he was, capered about with pain; while Thornton, and several others, laughed immoderately.

"No more, old man, no more, or I shall do you a mischief!" roared the sergeant, red with anger and mortification.

Colonel Somerton, who had been an unnoticed observer of this scene, now emerged from behind the cabin, and demanded, with asperity:

"What means this disorder? Shame upon you, sergeant, to lift your hand against a weak old man!"

"Weak! hand!" stammered Giles. "Not a hand—no, not so much as a finger have I laid on his scarecrow body; but discipline or no discipline, your honor, I'll thrash the old iron-pounder within an inch of his life, if he plays any more of his games on me. What's sarse for the goose is sarse for the gander. A short horse is soon curried, and a little man is soon licked."

"Howd' do, kurnil?" cried the swordmaker. "Been havin' a little sport 'mong ourselves here, all in good-natur', you know. Showed the corporil how I used to thrash the big boys when I went to school. Wild feller, I was, then, and—though I say it myself—a monstrous favorite 'mong the gals, too. But that's neither here nor there, and business is business, all the world over. I've brought my tools, and I'm goin' right to work. I can't fight for liberty; but I can hammer for't. So bring out your damaged weepens soon's ye like. Corporil, jest seize hold o' that anvil, and set it down here."

"I'm a sergeant in the Continental army!" said Giles, with dignity, standing very erect, and placing his hand upon his sword.

"Surgeon, are ye? Well, don't know as I want anything in your line. The neuralagy and rheumatics can't be cut out, can they? In course not. If you won't work yourself, call some o' your understrappers to help me put up that little tent that you see loaded on the cart. Shall keep the anvil ringin' all

night to-night, 'f there's anything to do—and I'll warrant there is. Tinkered up Marion's Brigade in good shape. They'll whittle the tory fellers monstrous when they meet 'em ag'in." Then to Colonel Somerton, to whom his garrulity gave no opportunity of speaking: "Hung the spy high as Haman, I s'pose, ha'n't ye?"

"He has not yet received his deserts," replied Somerton, without elevating his voice to the proper pitch.

"Yes, it hurts. Hangin' allers hurts, I believe," said Hirl, with philosophical confidence, dragging the little tent from the cart.

"There has been a most unaccountable mistake," shouted the colonel, approaching the hunchback, with an economical design respecting his lungs.

"Eh? Neck didn't break? Didn't give him fall enough. Died hard, I'll warrant. What a pity 'tis we have to kill off young men with so much life in 'em, when sich is so much wanted, 'stead o' worthless old hulks like me!"

"He that blows in the dust fills his own eyes, and he that talks to a post must furnish ears," said Giles, oracularly.

"Jes' so!" responded Hirl, who had a wondrous faculty of hearing the last word, or something approaching it in sound. "As I told ye, my right one is tore to bits, and that's why ill-mannered people—"

"Hullo!" interrupted Giles. "What in the world is comin' now? Here comes the mother of the witches and the devil's own camp-follower. Wishes are horses when beggars ride."

These remarks were called forth by the appearance of two females on horseback. The foremost was a woman past the bloom of life; while the other, who rode a little in the rear, was a mulatto-girl of some eighteen or twenty years. Both were mounted upon stout and steady-paced animals, evidently used to the drudgery of the plantation. Mistress and maid immediately drew the attention of all the idlers about camp, one of whom volunteered to conduct her to the person she was in search of—the commanding officer—in whose presence she soon found herself. If the colonel had formed the opinion that the swordmaker of the Santee was the most singular individual he had met with in South Carolina, he was now inclined to divide the honor with the woman before him. Her dress and deportment, and even her entire personality, seemed to belong to the past century. Her garments gave proof of both age and service. Each particular article of her toilet it would be tedious to describe; but all united to give her the prestige of an antiquated spinster. Her face—which had, by some means, receded into the depths of a bonnet of immense size—presented no very disagreeable points for criticism to pounce upon; but, notwithstanding, was invested with a species of sourness that could be felt and noticed without the possibility of description. Her complexion was white to the verge of ghastliness, while over her corrugated forehead fluttered coarse, gray hair, which had crept from beneath a very prim cap with an ample border of lace, that, by its simple severity, repelled familiarity. Her heavy eyebrows were gray; but the wonder of her visage was the eyes, which shone like two dark gems, imparting a weird light to her entire face. Her black gown was short and scant, displaying small ankles and thick-soled, high-heeled shoes. Her hands were covered with leather gauntlets, and she held the rein like one accustomed to equestrian exercise.

Her attendant was, as we have stated, a mulatto-girl—although we did not remark that she was comely, which was the case. Her features were quite as regular as those of the white lords of the soil, but painted over by Nature with a pale, soft yellow, which is preferable to a dingy white. Her curling locks were partly concealed by a turban set jauntily upon her head. Her gown of blue-and-white cotton appeared to satisfy her ambition as fully as if it had come from the silk-looms of India. Behind her was a package nearly as large as herself, ingeniously fastened to the saddle.

No one considered these parties more attentively than the swordmaker, who paused in the midst of his labors to stare at them. The elderly female fixed her keen eyes on Somerton, who bowed, and said:

"I wait your commands, madam."

The woman dropped the reins, disengaged her foot from the stirrup, and slid to the ground, disdaining the proffered hand of the colonel.

"Can't stop to be helped—allers help myself. No time to spend shilly-shallying about useless ceremonies. My name is Betsey Grindle. Live a few miles down the river. Half-sister to Squire Redmond. Brought some socks for the sogers. Saddled the horses, and trotted up with my yeller gal Meg. In a 'mazin' hurry! Meg!"—turning abruptly to the girl—"hop down spry and take off the bundle."

Betsey Grindle moved impatiently toward her maid, exhibiting to the lookers-on a most extraordinary hitch in her gait.

"Witches allers go with a hitch," muttered Giles. "It hasn't been long since she rode a broomstick, I'll be bound!"

The movements of Meg being rather dilatory, Dame Grindle quickened them by a smart cut of a long riding-switch which she carried in her hand.

"Laws, missus! what a takin' you's in! Allus in a hurry, you am. 'Deed, I can't move no quicker, missus!" expostulated Meg.

"Really, this is very considerate, Mrs. Grindle," the colonel began.

"I'm not a mis, sir!" replied the lady, curtly. "I'm plain Betsey Grindle, and mistress of my brother's household. I didn't jolt all the way up here on a hard-goin' horse and a ricketty saddle jest to hear ye say:

"Thank ye, mam!" I want ye to divide these things among your men fur's they'll go, tellin' 'em they're from Betsey Grindle, and no cowards must stan' in 'em. Meg, you lazy, idle, good-for-nothin' baggage! what are you stoppin' and starin' at the soger fellers for? Haven't I told you a thousand times over that time is money, and not a minute must run to waste? A'n't the wheels o' time a rollin' and rollin' as fast as they can?"

"I's lookin' at the handsome unicorns, Miss Bessy!" said Meg, apologetically, winking roguishly at Giles.

"How dare you look at the uniforms! I'll teach you to look at uniforms when the wheels o' time are rollin' us away at sich a monstrous rate. There's for you, you jade!"

Betsey Grindle gave her dependent another stroke across the shoulders; and then produced a large snuff-box, took a pinch herself, and then significantly held the box toward the offending Meg, who made a wry face, shrugged her shoulders, and reluctantly took a few grains of the obnoxious powder between her thumb and finger.

"Nose!" said Miss Betsey, imperiously.

Meg's hand made a slow journey toward the organ so laconically mentioned by her mistress.

"She hates it," said the latter, explanatorily, to the colonel. "It's a way that I have of correctin' her faults, which are legion; and the most abominable of which is her entire ignorance of the motions of the wheels o' time."

"Karshew!" sneezed Meg, which action was followed by a grin irresistibly ludicrous. Somerton smiled—the dragoons laughed.

"Time," observed the colonel, gravely, perceiving the hobby of Dame Grindle, "is truly not a thing to be trifled with; for, be it ever so ill-spent, we cannot recall it to live it over."

The swordmaker, meantime, had drawn near Betsey Grindle; and was continuing, from a closer point of observation, the scrutiny which he had begun at a distance.

"Squire Redmond's sister a'n't ye, mum?" he said, carelessly. "Have seen ye at the plantation, though my face mayn't be familiar to ye."

Dame Grindle turned suddenly upon the interrogator, whose simple words had evidently excited some interest in her mind.

"Don't remember seein' ye durin' the whole course o' my life. Have so much to do that I get precious little opportunity to notice folks that come to our place."

"Folks well? How's the young women? Used to know Judith. Nice gal! nice gal! Knew who used to hitch his horse to her father's door, but I won't call no names. He's took to evil courses, they say, since. British gold oughter be like p'ison to an honest man."

Dame Grindle's ghastly face became, for a moment, red, and her large eyes seemed to emit sparks of fire.

"You're not his judge, old man; and, let me tell you, you're speakin' lightly of one—" Betsey Grindle stopped.

"Yes, you say truly—he was an undutiful son, although I can say, without p'eviation, that he loved the gal. 'Twasn't common love, neither; but that kind that never goes out, either by fasting or prayer, but lasts to the eend. The poor soul used to exclaim: 'If she on'y knowed me as I am! If she could on'y read my motives! But she can't—she won't!' Ah, Goody Grindle, you'd oughter beard him!"

By this time the spinster was pale again. A mist and dimness floated before her eyes. She gazed at the swordmaker with wonderful earnestness.

"I forbid you to speak his name!" she said, with emotion.

"My name is Hirl, though ill-mannered people call me Old Hirl, Deef Hirl, Crazy Hirl, and sich," piped the hunchback.

"Colonel Somerton," said Dame Grindle, turning sharply upon that officer, "take these things away, if you want 'em, and make judicious distribution of 'em among your dragoons. Meg! stop grinnin', and think of the wheels o' time that are every minute rollin' ye to your grave."

"Karshew!" responded Meg.

"In behalf of my dragoons, I thank you, Miss Grindle. God knows the poor fellows need help!" said Somerton, with warmth.

"Oh, sir, that's all understood! Don't waste the minutes, for they're 'mazin' short, and go quicker this year nor they did last. There! my business with you is done. Good day, colonel! Don't say anything more to me, 'cause words don't cost nothin', and stockin's do. Next time you meet the Britishers, give 'em an extra cut or two for me. That's all I ask."

The spinster at that moment appeared to become conscious that many eyes were fastened upon her.

"Go off, you rude clowns! Didn't you never see a woman afore? Ruther run the g'antlet than be stared at this way. Pack off, the whole of ye, or not another sock will ye git o' me, if I live to be as old as Methusalem. Oughter be fightin', too, when time is so precious. There's tories and Britishers enough to keep ye busy every blessed minute."

Somerton made a gesture to such of the dragoons as the scene had drawn together; and they retired, much amused. He then ordered Corporal Thornton to carry the package to his quarters.

"If you wish refreshments, or if I can do you any courtesy," the colonel began.

"Don't talk to me of 'refreshment and courtesy,' when there's sich doin's throughout the length and breadth of the land! Do you s'pose I can stop to eat and drink, and hear fine speeches, when there's so much knittin' to do, and your men eenamost out to the weather for coats and breeches, and the Lord on'y knows who's goin' to make 'em, or where they're to come from? Mornin', sir, mornin'!"

"Good morning," responded the colonel, and walked away.

No one remained near Miss Grindle but the swordmaker, who, for the last few minutes, had been remarkably busy in adjusting his tent. She advanced directly upon him with that extraordinary hitch.

"What do you do?" she demanded, shortly.

"Pooty well, I thank ye. The neuralagy sometimes brings me up with a round turn, but I'm quite toler'ble now," squeaked Hirl.

"Meg, you limb, stop laughin'."

"Tan't my fault, 'deed, missus. Couldn't help it 'f I's cl'ar white, I's so tickled," protested the girl, rubbing the back of one hand, and then the other against her gown, and wriggling like a fish out of its element.

"How vexations!" murmured Dame Grindle—then elevating her voice till it vied in shrillness to the whistling of the wind: "Who are you, and what are you about here?"

"I'm called the Swordmaker of the Santee. My proper name is Hirley; but ill-mannered people call me Hirl, Old Hirl, Deaf Hirl, Crazy Hirl, and sich. I've brought my anvil and forge to sharpen up the weapons of the brigade. I'm a liberty man, mostly, and can hammer away from mornin' till night, paid for my trouble by thinkin' what a powerful sight o' mischief my work'll do to the enemies o' Congress. You've changed a good

"eal since I see ye, Goody Grindle—grewed old monstrous fast! There wa'n't half so many crows' feet on your face a year ago; but your eyes hold their own amazin'! Lord! what work they used to make with the sparks when you's a gal!"

Old Hirl rubbed the palms of his hands together and laughed good-naturedly, nodding and shaking his head. Meg cackled in concert.

"Nose!" said Betsey Grindle, presenting the dreaded snuff-box to her too-susceptible attendant, who immediately suppressed her mirth.

"You have spoken of Guy Deering," cried the spinster, directing her conversation to the hunchback.

"Not by name, leastwise. 'Tisn't a name that's pop'lar here."

The swordmaker looked searchingly at Dame Grindle.

"Is he alive? Is he a prisoner?"

The swordmaker glanced cautiously around.

"Both, both!" he answered, in a voice that made the woman start.

"Is there hope for him? Will he escape?"

"There is hope for all, Goody Grindle; consequently there's hope for Guy Deering," replied Hirl, pressing a tent peg into the ground with his foot.

"But—but—are you my friend—his friend?" queried the spinster, with increasing earnestness.

"Your friend I am, and I am both his friend and his enemy."

"Where is he?" Betsey Grindle's voice trembled. She pointed to the cabin significantly. Two armed men were pacing to and fro before it.

"There's a prisoner there," said Hirl, vaguely.

"It is Guy Deering!" exclaimed Miss Grindle.

"He is there and he is not," replied the swordmaker, with a glance at his interrogator.

"He is there, and he is not!" repeated the spinster. "I don't comprehend. Is he much known to you?"

"Well, well; yet in one sense he is a stranger. He went almost distracted for the love of Judith Redmond."

The voice of the swordmaker was less squeaking and his language better.

"What! Did he make a confidant of you? Did he talk of his love to an old man in his dotage? 'Tis false! 'tis false!"

"Say what you like, Betsey Grindle—say what you like!" retorted Hirl, petulantly, and falling into his old manner again. "I knowed the youth, and I loved him afore he took British gold."

How penetratingly the old man looked at her. "Thou art a slanderous villain!" muttered the spinster, in an undertone. "All the world say it of him, but I will not believe it."

Then in a louder voice:

"He is in this cabin! Will you—can you, help me save him?"

Dame Grindle was agitated—her color frequently changing.

"He was saved this mornin' from execution, perhaps he will be saved ag'in. What would you give to see him at liberty?"

The eyes of Hirl grew more searching and bright.

"All the world—life itself!" cried Miss Grindle, with singular emphasis.

"Bless your good heart, Dame Grindle!" said the old man, fervently. "I think better of ye for't; and if I should ever meet Guy Deering, I'll tell him how airnest the a'nt of Judith was about his safety. It'll please the unfortunat lad, who—not'standin' his dreadful trade—has good p'int's o' character. If he thinks he's right in betrayin' his country, I don't know as he'll have any deeper place in perdition than some others who think contrawise."

"Merciful Heaven! Must I hear this," exclaimed the woman, "without the power of contradicting it! How I sometimes hope—how I sometimes fear!"

The hunchback gazed at her without speaking. His wrinkled face beamed with various emotions.

"You are a strange being," added Miss Grindle, presently. "I must and will trust you. You have raised your tent so near the cabin where he is confined, that you can reach forth your hand and touch it."

"Whatever you say to me, Guy Deering shall hear," answered the hunchback, with peculiar emphasis.

"Old man, look at me! Keep faith with me as you hope to have it kept with you in the most serious things that concern your life and happiness. Take this saw and this purse: pass the first through a crevice to Deering: put the last in your pocket for the benefit of your wife and children. You have said that you shall work late to-night; do so in Heaven's name! The noise of your hammer will drown the noise of the saw. It is but a small favor for you to grant, but much and momentous in its consequences to him."

While the woman was thus eloquently speaking in behalf of the spy, she drew a small saw and a purse from beneath her gown, and proffered them to the hunchback. He received the saw, but not the purse. Tears stood in his eyes.

"Woman! woman! take away your gold! I can serve a feller-creetur without bein' bribed to do it. I can, and I will."

"And you will give him the saw?"

"Be as sure that it shall reach the hands of Guy Deering as that you see it in mine."

"Good, kind, generous soul! God forever bless you! Ah! how can we be conquered when even poor men like you spurn gold?"

"Spurn gold!" repeated the old man, with a sardonic laugh. "Some say"—he turned from her to hide his emotion. "Should I see the hunted youth," he added, anon, in a shaking voice, "might I take the liberty to tell him that your niece thinks a deal of him, and don't b'lieve more'n half that is said consarnin' him? Might I tell him? It would so cheer him—so lighten, as 'twere, his breakin' heart."

The swordmaker had by this time turned quite around again, and stood face to face with her, with clasped hands.

"You may! you may! Assure him that Judith Redmond—that is, tell him that my thoughtless niece loves him, in spite of—of—"

"Hush! Sergeant Giles comes this way!" interposed Hirl, in a whisper. "'Twas very kind o' you, mistress," he went on, in his usual piping tones, "to bring 'em to camp, for half o' the brave lads haven't a stockin' to their feet. They leave bloody tracks sometimes, mum, when they're pursued by the enemy and when they're pursuin' 'em, too; all for the want of somethin' to wear. I hope you'll come often on arrants of marcy like this, and the blessin's of the soger lads will foller ye to the last day of your life."

"A rare couple!" muttered Giles, as he drew near. "One with a mountain on his back, the other with a hitch in her gait. Pity they hadn't come together when they's younger!"

"Good-bye to ye, Mr. Swordmaker. Your sands seem to be e'enamost run out, but you can do a good 'eal yet, if you improve the time. I'm in a terrible hurry, for there's a power o' work to do when I git home."

"Birds of a feather flock together," quoth Giles. "They appear to be very well meanin' people, but they'd worry me into a consumption if I saw 'em often."

"Meg, horses! Horses, Meg!" said Dame Grindle.

"Nice mulatto gal! Eyes like glass beads, and teeth like pearls. What an old witch for a mistress!" added Giles.

"Meg, hand!"

Meg held her hand for her mistress to mount from, and received a suggestive stroke from her switch as reward. She then leaped nimbly to her own horse; and after casting a coquettish glance at the sergeant, ambled away after Dame Grindle.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SWORDMAKER AT HIS TASK.

The hammer of the swordmaker was heard till the small hours of the night. Various kinds of weapons passed through his industrious fingers. Battered swords, blunted and bent bayonets, and even damaged pistol and gun-locks, were sent to his tent for repairs. Several good-natured fellows offered to assist him in his labors, which proffers were promptly rejected.

"Every one to his trade," said the old man. "I might as well mount one of your heavy dragoon horses and go sogerin', as for people that never struck hot iron in their lives to think o' bein' any service to me. If temperin' a sword or restorin' a good edge to a blunted weapon is so mighty easy, there wouldn't be no need o' my trampin' from one part the

country to another. Jest keep out o' my way; that's all I'll ask. Out o' my tent, every one on ye!"

So the hunchback thumped, and blowed, and filed, and polished all alone. The sentinels that guarded the prisoner looked in occasionally, and when the swordmaker got tired, took a friendly drink with him from a large flask, which, whatever fluid it contained, was clearly much to their liking; for their calls became more frequent as the night progressed. Old Hirl grew elated with his potations, sung snatches of songs as he bent over the anvil, and even ran from beneath his awning to joke with the guards, who no longer observed straight lines in walking, but performed their evolutions about the cabin in a zigzag and staggering manner.

"Ah!" said Hirl, smacking his lips, "there's nothin' like a little sperrit to cheer the heart and brace up the nerves! Jest give them dragoon creeturs enough on't and they'll make Cornwallis start out o' Carolina like a thief from an orchard."

Hirl's back was braced against the cabin when he made this remark.

"What you whisperin' about?" asked one of the sentinels, in a thick and almost unintelligible voice; but strangely enough the deaf man heard him, and retorted:

"Sentinel, you're drunk! Keep movin' or you'll be down."

"It's a lie, old man! You can't git one o' Somerton's dragoons drunk. The liberty principle overcomes the drunk principle."

Some "principle" was visibly overcoming the physical system of the sentinel, for his legs were rapidly growing unworthy of confidence. The swordmaker shook his flask and held it up between his eyes and the moon, in an absurd endeavor to see how its contents had stood their united assaults.

"Another drop, old gentleman," soliloquized Hirl, "another drop, and then to your work. Don't make a beast o' yourself, old Hirl, but 'tend to your hammerin', and blowin', and let them make fools of themselves as will."

The hunchback shook the vessel; the sentinel heard the musical sound, and stretched forth his hand.

"Arter me, man; arter me is manners," said Hirl, playing with the dragoon's impatience by holding the flask an annoyingly long time to his mouth.

"You're heroes, every one of ye!" he rambled on, suffering the sentinel to take the flask. "Somerton's a hero, and the cap'n's a hero, and you're a hero. Hooray for the heroes! You'll wear gold shoulder-knots one of these days; and all the young women will cry out: 'What a dashin' soger-boy he is!'"

The swordmaker was interrupted by a fit of coughing, and reeled into his tent, talking to himself.

"What ye 'bout, Old Hirl? Don't ye know no better nor to be gittin' in this way? What would the kurnil say if he should see ye? Come! knock away at the weepsons. Fix up the choppin' knives for the lads."

The noise of the old man's forge became louder than ever. He seemed to be doing the work of two men. The clattering and filing grew prodigious. The sentinels did not interrupt him again—for either by design or accident, he had left the flask in their possession. When he next looked out, one was leaning against a post, in a sound sleep; while the other was trying to brace himself up with his musket, but making some mistake in his calculations, fell to the ground, from which he did not attempt to arise.

"Sleep, poor lads, sleep!" muttered the swordmaker. "It's little harm your slumber'll do your country."

The old man spoke calmly and seriously, without any signs of inebriation.

"To-morrow night," he added, turning to his work, "ye may rest on a different bed; for if I mistake not, there'll soon be fighting; and Somerton isn't the man to run."

There was a striking change in the swordmaker's voice and manner. His drunkenness was gone. His countenance had an expression of deep thought. He stood a few moments over his anvil, apparently forgetful of everything around him. Presently he sighed, and took up his hammer.

"Thus it must be!" he murmured. "The imputation must remain, the infamy cannot be lifted. Well! one serves his country in one way, another in another. He is the best friend to liberty who suffers most for it."

The swordmaker began to hammer and sing again:

"The hour is here, the moon shines clear,
The sentinels are sleeping;
Be of good cheer, and do not fear—
God hath us in his keeping!"

The hunchback suspended the strokes of his hammer, and sang these lines in a clear, distinct voice, with his face turned to the cabin.

There was a muffled rap on the wall.

"Then work away while work you may,
And keep the hammer going;
You must not stay till break of day—
Old Hirl, keep at your blowing."

There was another knock on the inner wall of the cabin.

The noise of the forge was resumed with undiminished vigor, and continued without intermission for an hour. The old man repeated the last verse of his song, and listened; there was no sound on the cabin wall. He cast from him the hammer and the weapon he was mending, exclaiming: "Thank God! my task is done."

CHATER VIII.

A NIGHT ATTACK—THE CYPRESS SWAMP.

Betsy Grindle, the spy, and the swordmaker, were strangely mixed in the mind of Somerton that night; they walked into the chambers of his rest, performing all sorts of antics there, and troubling him not a little. All these characters were in some manner connected with Cornwallis, and Tarleton, and tory partisans. From a dream more distressing than its predecessors, the Continental officer awoke, and sprang to his feet. For a moment, he was conscious of nothing save the darkness and dimness of his tent. His perceptions becoming clearer, he looked out and beheld the dying camp-fires, and the dull glimmer of arms stacked near them. The slow tread of sentinels reached his ears. He was returning to his couch to court more refreshing sleep, when it struck him that the air was unusually loaded with smoke. The circumstance startled him at first; but quickly recollecting that several fires were still burning, he believed that was a sufficient explanation of the fact. He did not, however, lie down again; but, seating himself upon a camp-stool, began to revolve new plans of operation against the enemy. He was soon profoundly absorbed in these calculations, which possibly might have employed his brain until sunrise, had not the wind hurled a puff of smoke into his face. He instantly arose, and hearing a dull and ominous roar, snatched his sword and cap, and ran from the tent.

Glancing toward the cabin where the suppositious Deering had been placed for safe keeping, he saw long tongues of flame darting from the roof. He bounded toward the structure, filled with resentment and surprise. He stumbled over a figure; it was one of the men who had charge of the prisoner, and who roused himself, muttering a drunken objurgation on whoever had disturbed his repose. Somerton hastened to the other side of the cabin, and found the other sentinel seated upon the ground, supported by a friendly post, with a strong odor of rum about his person.

The tent of the swordmaker remained where he had reared it, but the sound of his hammer had ceased. Impelled by strong curiosity, the colonel dashed in beneath the awning. The swordmaker was lying upon the earth, with his leather apron rolled up for a pillow. He was, to all appearance, in a deep and quiet slumber. While the officer was looking at him, a passing blast turned the flames toward the tent, and it caught fire. Beside the old man lay a pile of weapons bearing marks of his handiwork; attesting in the most indubitable manner to his industry.

"Strange old man!" muttered Somerton. Then the thought of the prisoner's danger occurred to him.

"Up, old man!" he added, seizing Hirl roughly by the shoulder. "Up! the tent is burning over your head."

The swordmaker yawned, opened his eyes, and closed them again.

"No quarters—no quarters! Charge on 'em!" he murmured.

Somerton caught him by the collar, and raised him to his feet, which awakened him. He stared at the colonel in perplexity.

"The cabin and the tent are on fire, old man! If you are sober enough, and have collected yourself, help me to save Deering."

The men have been tampered with—or there has been gross neglect of duty."

Somerton ran to the cabin door, and burst it open with a blow of his foot. A second door still opposed him, and he threw himself desperately against it; it fell in with a crash. A current of suffocating smoke met the colonel in the face, and drove him back. He paused till the first gush had passed, and the pent gases had found momentary vent, and was rushing in again, when the swordmaker—who had followed him—caught him by the arm.

"Are you mad, colonel?" he cried. "No human creature can live in there a minute."

"Let me go, old man! The prisoner must be saved at any risk, however great. It must never be said that the Americans burn their prisoners."

Somerton shook off the grasp of the swordmaker, and plunged into the whirling vortex of smoke.

"Deering! Deering!" he called, and groped from corner to corner.

He received no answer, and felt vainly for the form of the spy. The carbonic vapors went to his brain and lungs, and struck him down in a moment. A horrible gasping, choking, dying sensation overpowered him. He seemed to be whirled to and fro like a feather on the ocean. He felt himself death-doomed and lost. There was a footstep beside him; a strong hand lifted him from the floor. It was Hirl, who had plunged after him into the Tartarean bath of smoke and fire.

Somerton was conscious of being dragged a few paces; that his deliverer appeared to strike a passage through the wall with his foot; that fresh air rushed in; that he was drawn through a narrow aperture, and placed on the ground outside the blazing cabin. All this happened in less time than we have been relating it; and the colonel, after breathing the pure air a few seconds, was fully aware of the peril he had escaped, and to whom he owed his preservation. But Deering was still uppermost in his mind.

"Must he perish? Is there no way of reaching him?" he cried, as soon as he was able to speak.

The swordmaker was about to reply, when there was a deafening blare of trumpets, and the ground shook beneath the tread of horses.

"A charge of cavalry!—a charge of cavalry! The enemy!—the enemy!" shouted Hirl, in a stentorian voice.

"To horse!—to horse!" thundered Somerton, recovering his energies and self-possession. His voice was heard above the din of trumpets and the tramp of steeds. Almost simultaneously was heard the firing of the outposts. In a moment, the camp was astir. There was a hurried seizing of arms, and a headlong rushing for horses. Somerton was soon in the saddle; but not until the enemy was upon the half-formed ranks. Some of the dragoons were overthrown while mounting; while others fought resolutely on foot, watching an opportunity to vault into the saddle.

The conflict raged furiously. Somerton seemed in every part of the field at the same moment; and the men rallied bravely at his well-known voice. Several times he noticed that a horseman was at his side; but, in the smoke and confusion, at first thought him Rainford, or another officer. Presently, in leading a headlong charge, he distanced his men, and found himself hemmed in by the enemy. A dozen swords were raised to cut him down; but, managing his horse with great skill, and wielding his sabre with desperate determination, he kept his assailants at bay for a short time. He was wounded in his sword-arm, and was rapidly losing strength, when the horseman that had kept near him during the conflict was again at his side. How he reached him, the Continental officer did not know; but remembered afterward that a horse and rider were at that critical moment overturned, and rolled in the dust among the pitiless iron hoofs. Through the sulphurous smoke and dire confusion, he saw for an instant the face of the spy, and heard the report of a pistol. The thought flashed like lightning through his brain: "I am lost! This man will have his revenge." But the bullet whistled harmlessly over his shoulder, and a man in the uniform of a British officer, in the act of giving a fatal thrust to the colonel's horse, dropped his weapon, and pressed his hand to his breast.

Even in this situation, Somerton found room for an emotion of surprise. Just then, a tory trooper, who could not reach him in any other

way, hurled a cavalry-pistol at his head, which, taking effect, contributed to the catastrophe that followed. The shock bewildered him. Men and horses went whirling around him in a vortex of disorder. The only recognizable thing in this giddy dance of death, was the face of the spy.

When sense and volition returned, the din, and all the attendant horrors of battle, had rolled away like a panorama. He was lying on the ground, with a tattered camp-blanket thrown over him. The root of a cypress tree was his pillow. A glance sufficed to show that he was in one of the dismal swamps of the Santee, which afforded shelter alike to the patriot and the tory marauder. Somerton at once divined into whose power he had fallen; he was in the hands, doubtless, of a strong band of tory robbers, who lived by pillage and murder—making secret and rapid raids upon the inhabitants and small bands of patriots, and retiring as suddenly to the protection of the swamps and pine forests. And this explains why they were sometimes called the "Pine Robbers." Small chance of life had those whom luckless fate cast into their clutches.

The leader of this particular band was Christian Hadley—as execrable a villain as ever trod the soil of South Carolina.

A short distance from the spot where Somerton was lying, these remorseless enemies of liberty and humanity were engaged in the various offices and relaxations that follow a battle. Some were dressing the wounds of comrades; some were eating, and drinking, and making merry, while others were sleeping on the ground; the whole forming a wild and picturesque scene, of which the tall cypress and gum-tree, hung with moss, and the water-oak, formed the setting, while the long and slender canes waved gracefully in the background.

"What a pity," mused Somerton, "that such a spot should be desecrated by the presence of wretches!"

He unconsciously moved his arm, and experienced a sharp twinge of pain. He then remembered the night-surprise, and the part he had played in it until the face of Deering, the spy, passed before him; but after that, all was dark. He looked at his clothing, and perceived that it was saturated with blood, and penetrated in many places by sword and bayonet thrusts. It occurred to him immediately that he had been left there for dead—otherwise a guard would have placed over him. But no guard was in sight. A strong and not unnatural curiosity to learn how seriously he had been wounded took possession of the colonel's mind. He put his various members to the test—tried one limb, then another, and discovered that his injuries were limited to his head and right arm, which was little less than a miracle, considering how many weapons had been leveled at him.

"Ah!" sighed the gallant colonel, "if I could only give these miscreants the slip!" Then added by the same mental process, and with that passion for punning, which is more or less inherent in every human being: "With me it is slip or slip-noose. I wonder what the brave Rainford is about? He is too much attached to me to allow me to pull hemp for Captain Hadley without an attempt to save me."

A remembrance of the spy crossed the track of his reflections. "It must have been he," he muttered. "The same handsome, cold, melancholy face. There is no other like him, I am sure. Then there was the burning cabin. Let me see—I went in—yes; I went in. Death seized me by the throat. A giant rescued me, I think. The imprint of his iron fingers must be on my shoulders. How did he get me out? Did he thrust me through the solid walls? No, that couldn't be; yet I'm positive I did not escape by the door. Singular old hunchback! A knotty body does not always make a naughty soul. Bah! I'm wandering. That was a horrible shock on my head!"

Somerton shut his eyes with an expression of pain, and thought of his dragoons with inexpressible longing.

"Go 'long! go 'long, Crazy!" said a voice, that was familiar to the Continental officer, who heard, also, the rumbling of a cart. "Don't 'magine you're goin' to a funeral, de ye? The rheumatics and neuralgia don't trouble ye, do they, old gal? Hurrup, I say! hurrup!"

"The swordmaker!" murmured Somerton. "What does he here? He is a false knave, I'll swear!"

Meantime, Old Hirl trundled along to the spot where the colonel was lying, and seeing him, stopped his horse. Somerton lay quite motionless.

"One of the rebel creeturs," said Hirl. "Cap'n Hadley's boys have made an eend of him, I reckon. Well, all the rebels must come to it, sooner or later. The king's lads are cuttin' 'em up like Satan! Git up, Crazy!"

The swordmaker jerked at the reins, and the cart rattled on again.

"Old Hirl! Deef Hirl!" cried several voices; and these exclamations, and others of like character, passed from mouth to mouth.

"What you brought us now, old man?" demanded Captain Hadley, turning his sinister eyes upon the swordmaker.

"Bought a cow? No; there's none to sell, as I knows on! 'Tain't in my line," he answered, with a slightly-injured expression.

Some of the Tories laughed.

"Makin' fun of me, be ye? A good 'eal o' work shall I do for ye, if ye go on this way. Not a puff will I blow for ye, nor a blow will I strike!" added Hirl, petulantly.

"They don't mean any hurt," said Hadley, soothingly. "What's the news from the rebel camp?"

Somerton heard this interrogatory, and listened with deep interest for the swordmaker's reply.

"Yes, he was a great scamp," replied the hunchback, pointing to Somerton; "but he 'pears pooty well out the reach o' mischief, now."

"The old villain!" thought Somerton.

"I asked about the dragoons up the river!" shouted Hadley.

"Oh! They're mightily cut up," replied the old man, rubbing his hands with satisfaction. "There's scarcely one on 'em but got an ugly cut from your fire-eaters, last night. You made monstrous havoc among 'em, I tell ye. There isn't twenty of 'em that can mount a hoss, to-day, 'thout groanin'. You oughter make another dash at 'em while they're stiff from their wounds."

"I trusted that man!" murmured Somerton. "In these troublous times on whom can we rely?"

"How do they bear the loss of their leader?" screamed Hadley.

"It works 'em up mazin'! Cap'n Rainford chafes to and fro like a wild beast, swearin' that he'll have him, dead or alive."

"If he gets him, it will be as you see him, yonder," returned the Tory with a shrug.

"Noticed him as I driv along. The breath has gone clean out of him, and he lays there stiff and ghastly. 'Tisn't a pleasant sight about camp; and it don't bring good luck to have dead men so near, starin' at ye with their glassy eyes."

The Tory leader glanced toward Somerton, and then turned his face in another direction.

"I hate to have a body lookin' at me, as 'twere, when I work at nights in my little tent," added the old man, with many dubious shakes of the head. Then, with his eyes fixed on the prostrate form of Somerton, he went on: "How have the mighty fallen, and the weapons o' war perished! Yesterday mornin', this rebel was in full strength, and a terror to the royal troops; now he is cut down as grass, and the cunnin' has departed from his arm. I knowd his mother afore the lad was born. For her sake, I'll jest give him a decent burial; that is, dig a hole at the roots of a tree, and kiver him with mother airth."

"Are you sure he's dead?" asked Hadley.

"If you's dead as he is, cap'n, you'd thank somebody to bury ye!" replied the swordmaker impressively. "If he's alive, I should be the last one to get within reach of his arm; for he'd strangle me if he was at his last gasp! Seein' me here wouldn't make him over friendly. I'll fling him into my cart, and take him out o' the way; for the very sight of his body makes me shiver. They say he was proper handy with the tools—his aim was sure, and his blade sharp."

"Well, off with him, and make his bed somewhere where it won't be seen too much," replied Hadley, carelessly, glad to be rid of a dead enemy so easily.

Imagine the emotions of Somerton upon

hearing this conversation! Horror and indignation struggled in his breast.

The hunchback turned his cart, muttering as he did so: "If there's a few sparks o' life in him, the clods'll put 'em out. Yes, the clods'll put 'em out; they'll put us all out one o' these days."

Hirl turned his cart and approached the colonel, mumbling to himself with the imbecility of age.

"Rebels don't live long. It's a wicked thing to turn against one's nat'ral king."

The wheels of the swordmaker's cart brushed Somerton's garments, who had resolved to feign death and trust his chance for escape from the talons of this impromptu grave-digger. The latter descended from his perch, dragging his old musket after.

"There's nothin'," he squeaked, "like bein' prepared for an emergency. I'll jest prick him a little with the bagonet, and if there's any vitality in him, it'll make him cringe ag'in; for livin' flesh don't bear bagonet-thrusts very well."

Then in a whisper, which sounded like a note of salvation to Somerton:

"If there's any life in you, colonel, for God's sake don't show it! Trust in me." Then aloud, pressing the bagonet against him in several places, and dexterously thrusting it through his clothes into the ground: "No harm in him now, not a bit on't. These here arms won't never guide hoss no more, nor draw unlawful sword ag'in the king. Hillo, there, a couple of ye! Come and tumble this lump of mortality into my cart."

A shiver crept over Somerton. Could he keep up the deception? Would not the miscreants discover life in his body? It was a terrible moment for his nerves.

"Are we crows, that we should hover round sich carrion?" retorted a fellow not far from Hirl, who was cleaning his gun.

"Tumble it in yourself!" said another. "We ain't sextons, old boy; we only make work for 'em. You craved the job, and you may do it, for all my help."

"Well, I can do it myself, and no thanks to yer. Mayhap you'll want a weepin' sharpened, or a lock mended, and my memory'll be better nor my hearin'."

The swordmaker leaned his musket against a wheel, and, taking the colonel by the feet, dragged him to the rear of his cart. The Tories laughed to see how unceremoniously he handled him.

"Laugh as you will!" piped Hirl; "but when a person's dead, that's an eend to pain, use him as roughly as you may."

Then, whispering again to Somerton:

"Finely done! You look dead, for all the world. Don't wince!"

"What an old wolf!" said another, with a show of disgust.

"A guinea to a shillin'," cried a dirty corporal, "that Deef Hirl can't put him in!"

"Done!" said Captain Hadley. "At him, old gentleman!"

"I take the wager!" screamed the swordmaker. "A guinea ag'in a shillin'. Remember that!"

"The devil! The old chap hears when you speak o' money!" muttered the corporal.

The hunchback bent over Somerton, put his arms under him, raised him from the ground, and tossed him into the cart.

"The corporal has lost! Give him the guinea!" cried several voices in concert.

"Guinea!" exclaimed Hirl, contemptuously. "He never had a guinea in his life; or if he chanced to git hold of one, it went for rum and tobakky as soon's he could make the swap. Hurrup, Crazy! Gee! whoa!"

Crazy slowly put herself in motion, and the cart went squeaking and rattling into the swamp.

"There goes as brave a lad as ever drew sword, if he'd on'y been on the right side," said the swordmaker; and, with his musket on his shoulder, trudged on after his cart.

CHAPTER IX.

IN THE SWAMP.

A ride of several miles, through a dangerous part of the country, was before Dame Grindle when she left Somerton's camp. This distance was to be traversed by a mere bridle-path stretching across clearings, through pine forests, and along the borders of swamps. The sun was journeying rapidly adown the west, and it was not without apprehension that she pursued her solitary way. While

making the visit to camp, a strong and absorbing object had occupied her mind, and kept it from dwelling on the perils of the undertaking; but that mission having been accomplished, as far as practicable, her thoughts naturally took a different turn. Like a bow that has shot the arrow, the tension that gave her force was gone, and she was free to notice everything around her, and to call into suppositious being innumerable unpleasant contingencies. In the clearings, she expected to be seen from a distance, and pursued by some lynx-eyed loyalist; and, in threading the forest, her fears were continually hiding a tory marauder behind every tree. Sometimes she struck several diverging paths, which caused some doubt in regard to the right one; but she generally decided the matter by taking that nearest the river.

The ride home was singularly long. Dame Grindle could account for it in no other way but by the supposition that her fears had magnified the actual lapse of time. The sun went down too quickly; and twilight, it appeared to the spinster, stayed but a moment; while darkness hurried after it with unwonted haste.

"Missus," said Meg, "I de b'lieve we're el'ar gone lost!"

Miss Betsey tried to remove this impression from the girl's mind; but, unfortunately, her manner served to deepen it.

"Deed, mum, we nebber come dis way in de Lor's world! Jes' stop an' look down yer! Don't s'pect we come frew no sich place as dat ar—does ye, Miss Bessy?"

Meg stopped her horse, and pointed down the narrow vista before them. Her mistress also paused, chilled at the dismal prospect. To go on, was like penetrating a labyrinth of darkness and uncertainty. Her terrors, which had been steadily increasing, could no longer be concealed from Meg, upon whom they acted like a battery, each shock of which thrilled her utterly.

"Oh, missus, I knowed somethin' drefful would happen when we started on this yer wil' goose chase. We sha'n't nebber see de plantation no more! 'Deed, missus, we're as good as coted and murdered by de Pine Robbers! If them yer done gone, no 'count wheels o' time rolls us into that black hole, it'll jes' put de finishin' touch to us, and dat's the Lor's truth!" Meg's state of mind was too evident to need an interpreter. Instead of inspiring confidence by her presence, her company was likely to prove anything but re-assuring.

"If you don't choose to follow me, you can remain behind," replied Miss Grindle, in as firm a voice as she could command. She touched her horse and moved on, but with a dread and misgiving that fell little short of Meg's.

The forest was at that point more dense, and the solitude more palpable to the feelings. The path, too, was less defined, and her horse stepped with his nose near the ground. That she had mistaken her way, was a conviction that grew stronger at every step. That she had ridden far enough to reach the plantation, she could scarcely doubt; but persons who begin to feel themselves lost are apt to persevere in the wrong while there is a single shadow of hope. She could see no landmarks to guide her; she was conscious only of a black wilderness of trees, which swallowed up her and her maid like atoms of sand, or two waifs of thistledown.

"Missus," said the mulatto, with chattering teeth, "the path am 'tirely gone, an' we's ridin' 'mong the trees!"

This announcement did not surprise the worthy spinster, for she was already conscious of the fact.

"For once in your life, Meg, you're right. We've either reached the end of the path or lost it. Now don't sit there shakin' like a jelly, but try and be brave. If you don't, I'll cut ye up well when we get home," answered Dame Grindle, attempting to speak in her usual manner.

"Deed, Miss Bessy, if you'll take me straight home to de plantation, ye may cut me up and welcome; for, ye see, I can stan' dat, but I can't etan' dis yer."

"Turn your horse, and we'll try and find the way back to the path," said her mistress.

"Turn de hoss! Lor' lub ye, Miss Bessy, I's turned round ten times in de las' ten minutes. It don't make no odds which way we goes. Dere's trees dis way, an' trees dat way, an' trees everywhere! What's the use tryin'?"

An's no use. Might as well swound right away whar we is as anywhar."

"Swoon, Meg, if you think you'll get out of the woods by it; but I sha'n't give up without another trial."

Goody Grindle made repeated and continued attempts to recover the lost path; but every effort involved her in more inextricable labyrinths, until the points of compass were hopelessly lost. It was at this juncture that Miss Betsey proved herself a woman of nerve and resolution. Doubt in regard to their situation having yielded to certainty, she struggled heroically with her terrors, and tried to act rationally.

Perceiving that she was quite as likely to go deeper into the forest as to extricate herself from it, she proposed to give the rein to her horse, and trust implicitly to his instincts. This experiment she at once put in practice; and the animal, abandoned to his own guidance, snuffed the air, and smelled along the ground, starting off at a moderate pace. Miss Grindle had not proceeded far in this manner, when a shriek from Meg excited new alarm.

"Hush!" said her mistress, imperatively. "Your noise will bring upon us the very danger that you fear."

"Couldn't help it, missus, 'f I's to die! I's heerd somebody walkin' for two, free minutes, an' I couldn't squiet myse'f no longer. It am right down drefful, missus! Dar! don't ye hear it?"

"For Heaven's sake, be silent! Your folly makes me angry! It was but a squirrel running over the leaves."

Dame Grindle grasped the colored girl by the arm, and held it tightly.

"There! don't speak above a whisper!" she added.

"Dear me! how you does take hold. Dar! dar 'tis again! S'pect it am de Pine Robbers."

Betsey Grindle certainly heard a noise that sounded like footsteps not far off. She set her fingers more rigidly upon the arm of Meg; but physical pain could not neutralize or divert her mental disorder; a tell-tale moan hastened the dreaded catastrophe. The footsteps which had been uncertain and cautious, immediately became decided. A figure suddenly separated itself from the darkness, and stood beside them. We said that it separated itself from the darkness; but this is not strictly true, for the form itself was dark: it was a tall, broad-shouldered negro. He seized both horses by their bridles, and his large, white eyes glared up at mistress and maid through the obscurity. Dame Grindle experienced but one emotion—overpowering terror. The black made a noise like the chattering of an ape—it did not sound like human speech. Miss Grindle would rather have heard the growl of a panther. After standing a moment, rolling his eyes from one to the other, he drew a large knife from among the rags that covered part of his person, and holding it up menacingly, mumbled a horrible threat; then throwing both bridles over his arm, led—or rather dragged—the animals after him. Both submitted to this without the power of remonstrance. Meg sat in the saddle, nearly as white as her mistress, the fact of the man's color not in the least conducing to allay her fears. The silence of the forest; the distance from human habitations; the improbability of assistance, all concurred to heighten the hopelessness of their situation.

Miss Grindle, though naturally brave, was too much shocked by the appearance of the half-savage creature into whose clutches they had fallen to soon recover her mental equilibrium. The negro pulled the horses on, and finally entered a cypress brake, infinitely more dismal than the pine forest. The horses sank to the fetlocks in the black mud, and the trailing moss on the trees swept the faces of the captives as they were guided through the gloomy intricacies.

Presently they reached a thicket too dense to be penetrated, and this seemed to be the end of their journey. A hut of trees and bark was visible. The negro, still holding the bridles, set fire to a heap of dry brush, and signed for his captives to dismount, which they were loth to do. They could now see but too distinctly the fellow's face and form. As he stood in the strong light of the fire, he looked to Betsey Grindle like Satan himself. In frame he was large and powerful. His naked arms were

like bundles of muscles, and his bare chest gave indications of vast strength. His features were the most repulsive of his race, approaching very closely to those of the ape or monkey. But it was by no means a tame, expressionless visage, being alive with fierce and ungovernable impulses.

As the spinster gazed at that sooty countenance, she had a vague remembrance that she had seen it? Before dismounting, she resolved to make an effort to tempt his cupidity.

"Man or devil," she said, assuming a boldness which she assuredly did not feel, "conduct us to Mr. Redmond's plantation, and you shall receive ten pounds for your trouble."

An exulting grin distorted the face of the negro. He looked at Meg, and said, in a voice that might have come from the throat of a wolf:

"Git down, yaller gal! git down quick!"

Meg was too much terrified to move.

The ogre caught her by the foot and dragged her from her seat. He then made her unfasten the stirrup-leather, with which he tied her hands.

Miss Grindle beheld this operation with fearful misgivings. She would have turned her horse and fled from the black phantom as from the arch-fiend; but the bridle was over his muscular arm, and one of his rolling eyes was constantly upon her. Her fortitude was terribly shaken. For a short time she was scarcely conscious of what was taking place; but presently a painful pressure upon her wrists, made her aware that she, too, was being bound. She grew calmer. She saw the negro take the saddles and bridles from the horses and turn them loose; and it was then that she fully realized the extent of her misfortune. Her unequivocal terror clearly gave the black a savage delight.

"Set down dar, on de groun'!" he growled; and this order, like the others, they obeyed.

"Dunno dis yer nigger, does ye, missus?" he added, in the same dissonant voice. "You forgit; dis chile never do. You had me cut up monstrous bad—run away—live in de swamp—steal, kill—do ebery'ting bad. Hate white folks—hate niggers—hate you—hate all de world!"

"It's Black Jaffer!" cried Meg, creeping closer to her mistress.

The negro laughed malignantly.

Betsey Grindle felt faint and sick—for she remembered the slave and his punishment. Jaffer was a vicious and unmanageable negro, who ran away from the plantation some months before; since which time tales of his crimes had often reached her, inspiring her with terror, even when safe at home. The name of Black Jaffer had become a watchword of fear to quell disobedient children and unruly youth. His deeds had been truly horrible—providing half the stories respecting him were true, which there was no reason to doubt. He had joined the most desperate of the Tories; and having correct knowledge of that part of the country, was a useful ally as a spy and leader of pillaging parties. His iron energy and brute courage made him especially dreaded.

To find themselves in the power of this ruffian, was sufficient to conquer every vestige of courage that remained in the hearts of the unfortunate women.

"O Meg! Meg! what shall we do?" gasped Betsey Grindle.

"De Lor' knows, missus! We's in a drefful state, wid no way to help ourselves the leastest mite. I s'pect ye'd better tell de truff, Miss Betsey," answered Meg, looking piteously at Miss Grindle.

"The truth!—God in His mercy forbid!" cried the spinster, with singular energy.

"Keep silent, I charge you!"

"O Jaffer! good Jaffer! honest Jaffer!" moaned Meg; "take missus an' I back to de plantation, an' Mas'r Redmond will give ye more shiny ginneas than you can jes' count on yer fingers. 'Deed he will. Dey lie 'bout you, Jaffer, an' dat's a fact. You nebber steal, you nebber kill, nor do all de mischief they talks 'bout."

While the girl was making this appeal, Black Jaffer sat chuckling in a manner inexpressibly startling to Dame Grindle.

"Name your own price, Jaffer, and guide us to the plantation," she urged, with an earnestness that would have moved a nature less hardened and brutal. "Ten, twenty, thirty pounds—what you will shall be your reward!"

"Not for a t'ousand!" yelled Jaffer, springing to his feet, and flourishing his long arms. "Dis wild man doesn't want money. He want revenge on white folks. He keep you in de swamp—tie you—cut you up—he lib with you! Black Jaffer hab two wives—one white, totter yaller. How you likedat? Yah, yah!"

These words, with the harsh, menacing manner in which they were pronounced, completely overcame Betsey Grindle, and she sank back upon the ground, insensible. Her dress had become disordered by the rough usage of the night; and this movement disclosed a neck and bosom white, round, and beautiful.

Jaffer glared at her with stupid wonder; then, springing to her side, tore off her bonnet and cap, and held triumphantly up a wig of gray hair. A striking change came over the negro's face. Revenge and hatred gave place to emotions far more dangerous to the being stretched motionless at his feet. As he looked down at the pale and lovely countenance thus unexpectedly revealed, his sooty bosom swelled with the wildest joy. Meg arose, the picture of consternation; and, really aroused to something like action by the peril of her mistress, wrenched her small hands from the leathern ligature, and casting herself upon her, broke out in the most passionate strain of condolence—lavishing upon the inanimate form numberless endearing names.

Black Jaffer rubbed his leaden palms together, emitting cries of surprise and exultation that scarcely resembled human vocalization. The mulatto girl raised her mistress tenderly; and the glare of the fire fell upon a sweet young face.

"O Miss Judith! them yer locks has beer the ruination of ye! 'Deed they has. What is liberty good for, 'f ye lose yourse'f, lose me, lose ebery'ting? Open your eyes, missy; open your shiny black eyes, that Meg may look into 'em once more. I's been a coward; but I's mad now, and I'll fight for ye as de wolf fights for her cubs. Take care, Jaffer; take care, you runaway-nigger, or I'll write deten commandments on your no-'count face."

Meg's eyes were now flashing; and she was spiteful in her anger as she had been abject in her cowardice. She was like a wild-cat, ready to fly at the first aggressor, and worry him with tooth and nail.

The beautiful creature who had risen, chameleon-like, from the gray hair and antiquity of Betsey Grindle, recalled and soothed by the voice of her maid, came back to consciousness with a long-drawn sigh. As she sat in the strong reflection of the fire, supported by Meg, her pale and delicate beauty surpassed the common-place realities of life. Her first glance of returning sense rested on the black, who was devouring her loveliness with his greedy, passion-fired eyes. Such was the effect of his steady stare, that she sprang from the ground with a shriek.

Black Jaffer darted forward, caught Meg by the arm, lifted her, and, swinging her light figure toward the hut, cast her from him. By this time Judith had worked her wrists free; and when the black made an eager snatch at her arm, she eluded him by a sudden change of position. Meg fell; but, thoroughly excited, bounded back upon Jaffer like an india-rubber ball. She grasped his knees like a tigress, crying:

"Run, Miss Judith! run!"

The words acted magically upon the girl. Thought, reason, comprehension, action, were instantly restored. She fled. Her form was lost in the darkness of the brake in a moment.

Jaffer broke from Meg, with a cry of rage, and pursued her. Dashing into the swamp with eager bounds, he paused to hear the rustling of her garments and the flying footsteps that were to guide him; but the silence or death pervaded the darksome forest. While he stood, holding his breath and listening with rigid intensity, Meg caught up the treacherous disguise of her mistress, and crept away in another direction. As she stole from the spot, she heard the negro raging and plunging, this way and that, in pursuit of Judith.

CHAPTER X.

IN WHICH THE SWORDMAKER BECOMES A SEXTON.

Colonel Somerton's position in the sword-maker's cart was by no means comfortable, having been cast unceremoniously upon the various implements of the old man's trade. He found himself in contact with hammers.

pinners, bits of iron, and, to complete all, his limbs rested in a painful attitude over a small anvil while his head was pillowed on a coil of wire, and the nozzle of a pair of bellows pressed against his wounded arm. The Continental officer would have preferred a milder conveyance, and a couch less rugged; but, bearing in mind the proverb, that "what cannot be cured must be endured," he submitted patiently to his tortures, supported by the hope of escape.

Old Hirl shuffled along behind him, with as much apparent indifference as if he were going home after a successful circuit in the way of business.

"Whoa, Crazy! Look out for the trees, old gal. Mind your steppin'. Don't slop out the body by your loose travelin'. Look out for that log, old creetur! Gee, I say—gee!"

The hunchback cracked his cart-whip, and paid no more attention to Somerton than if he had been that disagreeable thing which he feigned to be.

The tory camp was still in sight, and several idle fellows were looking after him. The swordmaker was an odd figure, with his old musket on his shoulder, the hump on his back, his stooping person, and his particularly limping and shuffling gait. A hoarse chorus of laughter followed him into the forest. The trees soon hid him from view.

"Be patient, kurnil—be patient!" he said, at length. "The pryin' rascals are sharp-eyed, and we must be wise as serpents. 'Tisn't a feather-bed you're on, by a long shot; but it's better nor hangin', or dyin' by inches in the clutches of Christian Hadley, the renegade and ruffian."

"Better, far better!" murmured Somerton. "But relieve me as soon as possible, for I am painfully cramped and shaken."

"Keep still," said Hirl; "there's no knowin' what 'll happen. Prudence is a virtue heerd on by many, but possessed by few."

The old man carelessly lashed the bushes with his whip, and the cart creaked slowly on. One wheel finally struck against a fallen tree, and Crazy stopped.

"I'd better get out," said Somerton.

"Not for the world!" answered the swordmaker, quickly. "I can lift it over; and it would be like them crafty devils to come arter us, to put a trick on me, even if they don't mistrust nothin'."

Hirl put his shoulder to the wheel, saying:

"Come up, Crazy! What ye 'bout? Go 'long!"

Somerton, uneasy in both body and mind while Hirl was thus engaged, raised his head a trifle, and looked over the side of the cart. He saw two men among the trees, whose stealthy movements assured him that they had a sinister purpose in view. This discovery gave him a disagreeable shock. How should he warn the swordmaker of the danger? His unfortunate deafness would certainly prevent him from verbally informing him of what he had seen. The colonel's head fell back with a moan of pain—for, just then, the wheel jolted over an obstacle, and the concussion affected every part of him.

"We are watched! We are followed!" he said, in a subdued tone.

"Gee up—gee up!" vociferated Hirl, adding in a lower voice:

"I see 'em! They are two carrion crows, that are allers found strippin' the dead arter a battle or a skrimmage. I've seen 'em at it often, and I've got a long-stannin' grudge ag'in 'em. Assassination and plunder is their trade. Keep quiet, and trust all to me."

"Hillo, old man!" cried one of the fellows, suddenly showin' himself. "What you mutterin' about?"

The swordmaker made no answer; but, tracking his whip, the cart rolled on faster than before.

"I say, mister, what kind o' freight do ye carry?" added the man, in an insolent manner.

"Stop!" shouted his companion, "or I'll sand a bullet through ye, you old scarecrow! Ain't goin' to bury that chap in his regimental, be ye?"

"My name is Hirley; for short, I'm called Hirl, though ill-mannered people call me Old Hirl, Deaf Hirl, Crazy Hirl, and sich!" replied the hunchback, in those querulous and piping tones that characterized him when he raised his voice above a certain key.

"You forgit, Bill, that the old fool is deaf as a post!" said he who had first spoken.

"P'int your gun at him, Steve: that 'll stop him!" replied Bill.

Both then ran and overtook Hirl, who kept on as before.

"I say, old boy," cried Steve, plucking the hunchback by the sleeve, "a dead man don't need his coat, breeches, boots, and spurs, does he? Can't a rebel go to bed naked, seein' it's the last time?"

"Steve's gittin' to be a wag!" laughed his comrade.

"Don't be in a hurry, friend," replied Hirl. "There'll be time enough for that matter arter we get the grave dug. We're pooty near the camp; and Cap'n Hadley don't like any plunderin' done 'cept what he has a hand in!"

"Can't wait!" said Bill, sullenly. "You can do the diggin' arterwards!"

"Not a bit on't! Not a shovel-full of airth do I throw out, if you're to have the rigimentals. Jes' dig the hole when we git fur enough; and you may have all the duds and welcome, and much good may they do ye. My name is Hirl—now mind that!"

"The headstrong old devil!" muttered the man called Bill.

"A bayonet-thrust wouldn't do him no harm!" said the other, in an undertone.

The swordmaker turned his head, and looked at the ruffians in a peculiar manner. There was a magnetism in his eyes that, to a certain extent, quelled and awed them. They permitted him to drive on, grumbling at the length of the way. He finally reached a spot which, he averred, would answer the purpose. Taking a pick and shovel from the cart, which he had provided, he threw them at the feet of the two tories.

"Now, my hearties," he said, "make a hole at the foot of that cypress, and you shall have the coat and boots."

The men demurred; for, since the breaking out of the partisan war, work of all kinds had become exceedingly distasteful. It was a critical moment for Somerton, who was in feverish expectation of a discovery. What could the old man do against these wretches? In all probability, they would overpower him with the greatest ease. As for himself, he had no weapons—nor strength to use them if he had. He doubted if he was even strong enough to stand upon his feet. The time thus far consumed in this singular attempt to escape was to him terribly long, and, in his wounded and helpless state, rendered peculiarly dreadful by the conflict of hope and fear.

The two outlaws glanced inquiringly at each other, and then at the hunchback, who, setting his musket against the cart, was tugging at one of Somerton's boots. One of the plunderers ran and seized the other; but Hirl pushed him away with a violence that made him spin round like a top, and threw after him the boot which he had succeeded in drawing off.

"I knew the lad's mother," he cried, while his pale face flushed, "and I won't have his lifeless remains abused. The things I named you shall have; but if ye git more, you'll have to fight Old Hirl, the Swordmaker of the Santee!"

There was a wonderful energy in his voice, considering his age, and an ugly glare in his eyes. In his excitement, he mounted the cart nimbly, and, while the tories were muttering and whispering, stripped off the luckless colonel's coat; which was not an easy task—for Somerton was heavy, and hung with a dead weight on his hands. Having accomplished this, he rolled up the garment, and tossed it toward the fellows, with a strong expression of contempt. They growled and complained, and approached the cart with dogged determination.

The old man sprang down, caught his long musket by the muzzle, and, with a single sweep, prostrated both the thieving rascals. He stood over them with glowing eyes and heaving chest.

"God only knows what keeps me from makin' an end of ye!" he exclaimed. "Both rebel and royalist would approve the deed. Don't think Christian Hadley would inquire who give ye your desarts; for he wouldn't. I've seen ye at your work—you, Bill Flanders, and you, Steve Martin—and long to try one o' my sabres on your vile bodies!"

The swordmaker's anger grew stronger as he went on. No longer able to control himself, he seized his heavy cart-whip and made a violent assault upon the astonished objects of his resentment. His blows fell on their

shoulders and faces with a rapidity and vehemence that made them bellow with pain, and left bloody tracks on their cheeks, and wherever the avenging lash touched the skin. They ingloriously fled, leaving the field and the plunder to the victor.

"Them are creeturs," said Hirl, "that would rob a friend as soon as an enemy, though they hang like grim death to the skirts of Christian Hadley's land-pirates; but jest turn the scales, and let the Continentalers come up and the king's men go down, and they'll whiffle over like weathercocks. Skinners is the name they'd oughter go by."

"There are others," replied Somerton, "who seem to serve God and Mammon, and are equally welcome in both camps."

"Sartin! sartin!" answered Hirl, innocently. "They a'n't the only two crows that fly in the air, guided by the scent of carrion."

"For God's sake don't keep me longer than is necessary in this horrible dilemma!" groaned the Continental officer, seeking vainly for an easy position among the implements of the swordmaker's art.

The latter took up the pick and began to use it with all his might.

"We must mind 'pearances," he said, bending his humped back to the work with a will. "The ground must be broke, and a mound raised, and somethin' dragged along the ground."

Somerton watched the operations of the swordmaker with an intensity of impatience that can be known only to one in his situation—fearing every moment that Flanders and Martin would return with birds of similar feather. Hirl toiled like a hero. The wounded man marveled at the vigor of his arm, which exhibited none of the tremulous weakness of age. He scooped a shallow hole, into which he threw limbs of trees and rotten wood, upon which he shoveled back the earth in the shape of a grave. This done, he made a trail in the leaves with his feet, as if a heavy body had been drawn over them.

He glanced at his work with an air of satisfaction, placed Somerton's coat and boots in the cart, scrambled to his seat, seized the reins, and choosing the most open way, drove off.

"Crazy, Crazy! what ye 'bout?" he said, in a quick, sharp voice.

The sorry-looking mare pricked up her ears, and started off rapidly. The change in her gait was as extraordinary as anything that had happened during the morning. Somerton, at the imminent risk of having his brains dashed out, raised his head from a coil of wire to assure himself that the high-boned Crazy was really capable of such speed. But the marvel had only begun; the odd creature went faster and faster. The miscellaneous bits of iron, in company with hammer, tongs, and anvil, had a merry dance, to the supreme worryment of the person who ought to have been a corpse, but wasn't.

"Good heavens, old man! You might as well put me in a mortar and pound me, as to jolt me over the ground in this way! The devil's in that mare!" cried the colonel, pitiously.

"Yes, she is possessed at times. Used to call her Mary Magdalen on that account. Go 'long! Hi! hi!"

The eccentric creature seemed to be trying to run out of her harness. The trees dashed by the cart, apparently like race-horses. A steeple-chase was nothing to it. Somerton was obliged to grasp the side of the vehicle with both hands.

"On'y 'leven year old!" shrieked the old man above the din and clatter. "On'y 'leven year old!"

The wounded officer looked up appealingly, and saw Hirl sitting unconcernedly on his perch, with a rein in each hand, his musket between his knees, and his great cart-whip at his feet.

The morning sun shone on his hump, making it look like a hot shot, or a bomb-shell at a white heat.

"People that don't know nothin' 'bout hosses, think she's fifteen; but I know her age to a day. I can trace her genealogy in a d'rect line. Her mother was a long, slab-sided, weasly-lookin' axmil, and her sire was the most vicious creetur that ever broke halter or slipped bridle. Crazy's low in flesh this summer, but jest turn her out a few days, and give her a pile of oats, and she'll show ye a trick or two when your business is pressed."

and there's danger afore, an' ahind, an' all round."

Hirl stopped so sudd'nly, that every article in the cart, the colonel not excepted, plunged forward against the head-board. Shriek after shriek came from the forest; it was a woman's voice. The hunchback sprang from his seat like a rocket, and the colonel saw him running swiftly to the left, with his musket. His curiosity rose above his pains. He saw figures half hidden by the trees, and the flutter of female garments. The forms came nearer; they were women flying from pursuers, and the cries he had heard were uttered by them.

The swordmaker flew wildly to meet the fugitives, who were no other than Dame Grindle and her maid Meg. The cause of their terror was immediately manifest; the two marauders, Martin and Flanders, were hotly pursuing them.

"Go on, gals! Go on!" said Hirl, passing them, and stopping behind a tree. "Go on, and I'll have a settlement with these skinners."

"'Tis the swordmaker! 'tis the swordmaker!" exclaimed the suppositious Dame Grindle, who had resumed her gray hair and cap, and retreated again into the almost mythical depths of her bonnet.

"It am de debble, more like, missus, wid all dat yer on his back!" asserted Meg, on whose mind the startling incidents of the night and morning had made deep impression.

Both paused, partly from exhaustion, partly from bewilderment. Possibly they feared that the old man could not contend with the two. While they stood panting and gazing at the hunchback with swimming, dizzy incredulity, he aimed his musket and fired. When the smoke cleared away, neither of the villains were to be seen, but footsteps were heard growing every moment less distinct. Judith thought she heard groans, also, but was too much disturbed to dwell long upon the subject. The color receded from her face, and the swordmaker hastened to place his arm about her waist to support her; for Meg, in a military point of view, was quite demoralized.

"Strange, strange, that I should encounter you here!" murmured Judith, sighing and trembling on the verge of unconsciousness.

"Nothin' extr'ordiner, Goody Grindle. My trade carries me everywhere e'enamost," answered the swordmaker, drawing Judith closer to him.

"True! true!" returned Judith, recovering, and remembering the character in which she was figuring. "There! that'll do, my good man," she added, returning to the Betsey Grindle voice and manner.

"Don't waste precious time in holdin' up a woman when there's no danger of her fallin'."

"In the name of God—" began the swordmaker, with remarkable earnestness.

Judith looked at him wonderingly.

"I mean—why is this, Goody Grindle? What in the name o' reason are you wanderin' here for? Why ain't ye at home, at the squire's?"

"We's jes' been a'ar done lost," interposed Meg. "De Lor' only knows what missus has underwent, and what I's underwent. We's seen de debble hisself; and we's been chased! Golly gracious, how we has been chased!"

The swordmaker trembled like a leaf. His face was pale as snow.

"What's the matter?" cried Judith, whose sympathy for others was always active.

"He's goin' to swound, I s'pect," suggested Meg.

"In the forest—all night—alone!" He stopped; then resumed, in his accustomed manner. "'Twas right lucky, my stumblin' upon ye, gal. Somethin' mighty unfortunat might happened. Don't never expose yourself so ag'in, Dame Grindle."

Judith glanced timidly at the swordmaker; she wished to say something, and she said it.

"Did you give him the saw?"

Her voice was low and tremulous, and it was marvelous that the old man heard it.

"The Lord be merciful to me, yes! 'Twas treason, as 'twere; but for your sake I did it," said Hirl, musingly, and shaking his head.

"My sake!" repeated Dame Grindle.

"Sartin! I never could refuse a woman anything. When I went a courtin' my wife, Sary Ann, she'd on'y to roll her little black eyes at me, and smile kinder soft, to make me run my legs off for her."

The parties had by this time reached the cart.

"Don't be talkin' 'bout sweethearts and sich vanities, when the wheels o' time are rollin' at sich an awful rate o' speed!" admonished Dame Grindle, with reproving severity.

"Yes; the wheels have been goin' pooty fast," said Hirl, pointing at the cart and the muddy spokes. "They couldn't roll much faster, I reckon. Got a wounded officer here, if there's anythin' left of him; he's nighabout shook to bits, I'm afeard. It's the kurnil. You know the kurnil, don't ye? Seed him at the camp when ye carried the socks. By the way, them socks oughter be mentioned in the dispatches. Shall speak to Washin'ton 'bout 'em, if I happen to run athwart him. Kurnil, you must take in another passenger. Meg, scramble into the cart, and hold the kurnil's head in your lap; the poor feller is terribly hurt, I s'pect. We must take him down to Squire Redmond's to be nussed."

Somerton remembered Miss Redmond's visit, and his haggard face flushed.

"Goody Grindle, you'll set on the seat with me," added Hirl. "Climb up the best way you can. Give me one o' them little hands. There! that's it. Now, we'll drive to your brother's plantation."

The swordmaker cried "Go 'long!" to Crazy, and the mare started off like a race-horse contending for the highest honors of the turf. Hirl prudently put his arm around Dame Grindle to prevent her from falling. It was very kind of him, indeed. The wheels turned and turned; the axles creaked and creaked; and trees and bushes went flying past. There was a great deal of sunlight on the old man's back, and some on the spinster's face.

CHAPTER XI.

IN WHICH THE SPY APPEARS.

Hirl reached a narrow wagon-road where the traveling was less precarious. Instead of increasing his speed, he went slower. A shrill whistle resounding through the woods caused him to stop, give the reins to Judith, and run abruptly into the forest.

This man's movements were so eccentric, that the colonel was not surprised at this conduct; but the young woman sent a wishful and perplexed glance after him.

"Has he deserted us?" she said.

"He is an erratic being," replied Somerton; "but I trust he will return."

The officer, by the aid of Meg, raised himself to a sitting posture. The rough ride had shaken him severely, and caused some bleeding of his arm, but in reality had done him no injury; starting his stagnant circulation, it had tended to revive him. His object was to watch the swordmaker, whose uncommonly figure he could see moving among the trees. He saw a man emerge from a hazel thicket, and hasten to meet and shake hands with Hirl. The manner of both was cordial and hearty.

"'Tis he! I could swear it!" muttered Somerton, shading his eyes with his hand. "The same straight, athletic frame; the same—"

"Did you speak to me, sir?" asked Judith.

The colonel neither heard nor heeded her. His mind was occupied with the man with the swordmaker. The interview was short, and Hirl came back at a quicker pace than he left them.

"Cap'n Hadley," he said, in answer to the inquiring looks of Judith, "is out for forage with a dozen of his trustiest marauders. They are well mounted and comin' this way, probably on a visit to Squire Redmond's plantation."

Dame Grindle—it is convenient to call her thus—was much affected by this information. Her agitation was at once apparent to Hirl.

"Don't tremble, Dame! 'Tisn't women he's arter, but cattle and provender. I'm sorry for the squire, for they'll make a clean sweep of everything to eat, drink, or wear. But, my word for it, neither you nor the gals shall be harmed. I know that Judith is timorous, and Miriam ready to faint at the sight of a tory or a red uniform (leastways, that was the case when I used to know 'em at the breakin' out o' the diffikilties), but I reckon that Cap'n Rainford'll send down a few of his dragoons to spile the sport of Christian Hadley and his cut-throats. Kurnil, we must hide you in the bushes till arter the party

passes; for you see 'twouldn't be proper for him to find a rebel that's jest been buried ridin' in my cart."

"Can't you drive fast enough to reach the house first?" Somerton asked.

"Yes, we might do that, but 'tis easier to hide you here nor there; for, if the creeturs have their way, they'll s'arch the house from top to bottom for plunder. Now, 'twouldn't be 'greeable for you to be there at sich a time."

"Your face isn't one that Hadley, or his men, will soon forget," observed Dame Grindle.

"Do as you like; I trust entirely to your judgment," replied the colonel. "Assist me from the cart, and I'll show you that I'm worth two dead men yet."

The swordmaker put his right arm around Somerton, and helped him to the ground; he was able to walk quite well, and, steadied by the old man, made his way to a thick cluster of young pines.

"Lay down and keep still, and nobody'll find ye," said Hirl; and with these brief instructions returned to his cart, where Dame Grindle and Meg awaited him with feverish impatience.

"Now, Crazy," he added, with remarkable cheerfulness, considering the circumstances, "we'll see what you can do."

The hunchback sprang to his seat with wonderful alacrity.

"Hold on to the sides o' the cart, yeller girl; cling to my arm, dame. Ho, Crazy! Git away, creetur—git away!" And the rickety vehicle creaked and clattered along the road with surprising rapidity. Had Judith Redmond not been warned that Christian Hadley was behind, she would have been terrified by the furious driving of Hirl; but, for reasons well-known to herself, there was no person living that she feared more than the tory leader.

In a short time they came to a clearing. The swordmaker drew up his mare.

"I can go no farther," he said. "Cross this clearing in a direct line to yonder tree, and Squire Redmond's plantation will be in sight. Make haste; but don't run too fast, or you'll git tired out afore ye git there. Gals, I've observed, a'n't over an' above long-winded at a race. And dame, good dame," he added, in a gentler voice, "be very keerful of yourself, and don't be ketched out ag'in o' nights for the best spy that ever trod the airth. Guy Deerin' wouldn't slept a wink if he'd had never so good a chance, pervided he'd knowed that you—that Judith's a'nt was wanderin' about in the woods, exposed to all kinds o' danger. I say it for your good, and I'm sure Guy Deerin' would say it to you himself, if he was here."

Dame Grindle's face was crimson; there appeared no sufficient reason for the same, but the fact was evident. She took the old man's hand by a sudden impulse. The contrast between those two hands was notable—one was so large, the other so small, and the small hand trembled less than the large one, which was strange.

"Then you are his friend—really his friend?" she said, with not a particle of Dame Grindle's shrillness. Whether he heard by instinct, or whether she spoke in his left ear, or whether a woman's voice is more readily heard than a man's, we are not able to state; but Hirl clearly understood her.

"I believe—I think I am. I was, leastways, afore he touched British gold."

"Do not say so—do not, I beg!" she answered, letting his hand fall.

"You have a leetle—jest a leetle faith in him—in him, the hated and the hunted?"

"I have, or if I have not, God knows that Judith Redmond has; and what she believes, I believe; and what she thinks, I think."

She brushed tears from her eyes, then added:

"He escaped! how much I thank you! Did he give you no message for me or my niece?"

"Dear dame," answered the swordmaker, in tones that were soft and moving, though not quite steady, "Guy Deerin' whispered to me before he went, and said: 'Tell her that my soul is continually kneelin' at her feet, and pourin' out words of eternal gratitude and love. Tell her that her faith in my motives, though it be no larger than a grain o' mustard, is sufficient to thrill me with inexpressible emotion.'"

While he was speaking, Judith gave him her hand again.

"Oh! oh! Did he say that? How well you repeat it! I could stand and hear you say it for an hour—for the sake of my niece."

"And I, for the sake of the pooty dear, could keep talkin' it over a whole day. But time must be improved for other purposes. Warn the squire; tell him to arm all the niggers and make his house his castle. There! go, dame, go!"

"Right, old man, right!" replied Judith, with a sudden revulsion to the Grindle style. "I declare if 'tisn't near noon! Lord, how the wheels o' time are rollin' us away! We shall soon be clods o' the valley."

"Not so fas' as dem yer wagin-wheels," suggested Meg. "Lors! what a boss dat mare is!"

Old Hirl jumped into his cart, turned it, and with another admonition to the females, trundled away in a twinkling.

Meantime, Colonel Somerton lay in the pine copse in no cheerful mind, suffering from exhaustion, hunger, thirst, and pain. He was too much of a soldier to despair, so made the best of it; and after listening awhile for the coming of Hadley, was on the point of falling asleep, when a cautious tread aroused him. He beheld with alarm a man in a slouched hat standing within a few yards of him. The hat was drawn over his brow in a manner to partly conceal his face, and a large, coarse camp-cloak covered most of his person. This figure stood quite motionless, looking at the wounded officer.

"Well, sir?" said the colonel, not knowing what else to say. "What's your business?"

For a reply, the intruder raised his hat and threw open his cloak.

"Guy Deering!" exclaimed Somerton, with a feeling of uneasiness, for he saw a brace of cavalry pistols protruding from the man's pockets.

"By that name you have called me, and by that name you would have hanged me!" answered the spy.

"And justly, I believe!" retorted the officer.

"If I am the man you take me to be," said the spy, taking hold of one of his pistols, "you are certainly placed in an embarrassing situation. According to your views, I should be your most deadly enemy. Look! I cock this pistol, thus, and I have only to aim it at you, thus, and press this little piece of iron, to put you forever beyond the possibility of hanging Guy Deering."

The man cocked the pistol, but instead of turning its muzzle on Somerton's person, pointed it at a tree. The colonel watched the movement with suspicion.

"You can murder me, no doubt, for I am unarmed and wounded," he said.

"But were you well, mounted on your swift horse, and armed from head to foot, and I a wretched fugitive flying for life, you would not hesitate to spur after me at the hazard of your neck!" interposed the spy, quickly, and with bitterness.

"Nothing could be truer!" answered the undaunted Somerton. "Such would be my duty."

The spy regarded him with singular earnestness. His pistol was cocked; he eased the hammer carefully down, and returned the weapon to his pocket.

"You are in my power, Colonel Somerton."

"It is too true!"

The spy again drew the pistol from his pocket, slowly.

"Honestly, colonel," he added, with a sarcastic smile, "what use do you think I shall make of my power?"

"I think you will shoot me with one of these pistols!" replied Somerton, calmly.

"Such is your firm conviction?"

"Before God, it is!" said Somerton, solemnly.

"Let us change the case, colonel. Let us imagine that you have found me in the woods; you, on your war-horse, with sword and pistol, and I, fatigued, weaponless, wounded, and on foot."

The man's breast worked with emotion; his voice was clear and deep.

"I would capture you, if possible; but if I could not take you alive, I should—"

"Take me dead!" added the spy, suddenly.

"I will not coin a falsehood to save my life," said the officer, sternly.

The spy did not instantly reply, but threw

the pistol upon the ground within reach of the colonel, who looked at him in amazement.

"Your life," said the spy, "would avail me nothing. Should the real Guy Deering ever fall into your hands, pass this mercy to his credit."

"Unaccountable man! you still deny your name!" exclaimed the Continental officer, still more perplexed. "Who are you?"

"A riddle that you cannot comprehend. I am and I am not; I am guilty, and I am innocent. Believe me, you will never, never know me! Our ways lie different. Hatred and infamy, cursing and bitterness are between us. At the bar of God, only, shall we see each other as we are."

He stopped, and looked upward with an expression half stern, half melancholy.

"Your cause," he added, presently, "is failing. Royalty will soon triumph. Tarleton is on his way hither with his terrible legion; he will surprise the Swamp Fox and you. There is mischief and danger on every hand. There will be sorrow on the Santee; houses will burn and blood will flow. The scouts of Christian Hadley will not sleep, and a dog cannot bark in your camp without being heard by an enemy."

"And you can speak of this," interposed Somerton, indignantly, "with calmness?"

"Hark! Hadley comes down the wagon-road. Lie still, and farewell!"

The spy slouched his hat over his eyes, and turning, disappeared with a quick and measured step. A few minutes afterward, a party of mounted men passed his place of concealment at a gallop.

CHAPTER XII.

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

Judith and her maid crossed the clearing, and reached the tree designated by Hirl. They could see the plantation as he had told them, but there was a long stretch of bottom-land to traverse before they could reach the house. Through this bottom-land meandered a small brook, upon the banks of which grew various kinds of bushes, some to considerable altitude. Judith was hurrying on, when Meg suddenly stopped her. When the young lady sharply demanded the reason of this, Meg could only stammer:

"O Miss Judith! O Miss Judith!"

Luckily she pointed toward the brook, and Judith, following the direction of the finger with her eyes, saw Black Jaffer peering from the bushes, and eagerly watching the road leading to the house. This was a discovery, indeed! It was well for them it was not made too late. Judith sensibly beat a retreat without so much as a shriek or a fainting-fit, and Meg had just enough discretion to keep close to her mistress. The runaway black was evidently there for no good purpose. He was either waiting their return, or making a survey of the premises with a view to plunder and pillage; very likely he had both these objects in contemplation. It was necessary, to avoid Jaffer, to make a long detour to the Santee, and this they undertook to do, which could have been accomplished with time and patience, had not a new difficulty prevented, which took the shape of Christian Hadley and a dozen of his lawless followers, who—having arrived as near the plantation as was thought safe, halted in a growth of cypress to make a reconnaissance on foot. On account of this circumstance, mistress and maid found themselves between two perils, neither of which were anticipated. They could not traverse the open space between the cypresses and plantation without being seen, and they could not very well make a circuit around the party by reason of a cane-brake in the rear; so between Jaffer and Christian Hadley (who was not a bit of a Christian), they were placed in a very embarrassing dilemma. It may be thought by some that pretty young ladies who fascinate folks in novels, can do without food and drink without a great deal of inconvenience, and sojourn in a wilderness or exist in a dungeon almost any length of time without change of garments, and look interesting all the while. This too common opinion cannot be applied to Judith Redmond and Meg, being in their case untrue; for they were really the worse for fasting and running like distracted creatures through the tangled thickets of the forest. Judith was not so ethereal as to rise above the wants of nature, and long abstinence was telling upon her strength.

Our heroine would have eaten heartily, if

she had had a chance; and it would have been, considering the exertion yet required of her, a very sensible thing. But little of the primness and precision of her assumed character remained, so far as apparel had to do with it. Her gown was rent in many places; her high-heeled shoes and yesterday immaculate hose, were soiled with the black mud of the swamp, and her not ample skirts, short as they were, were wretchedly painted with the same unlovely pigment. Neither mistress nor maid would have been thought angels in a drawing-room at that time. But fear is a marvelous blunter of appetite and fastidiousness. Both might possibly have forgotten the pressing demands of appetite, had not weakness admonished them of the fact. Hiding like partridges in the bushes, they heard nothing for a time but the thumping of their own hearts. By-and-by, Judith's natural courage revived, and she began to debate the best method of reaching home. It was precarious moving in any direction; but Judith felt the imperative necessity of warning her father and his household of the calamity that impended. Fears for her personal safety were in a measure counterbalanced by an unselfish solicitude for her friends. She remembered that she had been out all night, too, and that the greatest anxiety must be felt for her safety, which her presence would at once relieve.

She watched the cypress-trees and the bottom-land a long time; but Jaffer kept at his post, and she could see the horses of the Tories grazing near the cane-brake, and a man standing guard over their movements. Judith commenced a cautious retrograde toward the wagon-road, where she had parted with the sword-maker. Meg, though quite dejected, was guided by her superior judgment without question. They climbed a hedge, and stood in the road. They had gained something, being farther from both enemies. Looking up the wagon-road, Judith saw a man in a slouched hat and blue camp-cloak, approaching with hurried strides. Her first impulse was to fly; but something familiar in the gait and person of the new-comer caused her to remain irresolute. The man saw her, uttered an exclamation of surprise, and eagerly advanced. Various emotions chained her to the spot. She would have been troubled to designate the predominant feeling of her heart. She felt pleasure, surprise, and fear.

Guy Deering sprang to her side, and took the unresisting hand in his.

"Judith," he said, "this is a pleasure that I did not expect."

"You know me, then, through my disguise?" she said, with a faint glow of happiness.

"Love cannot be deceived; it looks through all disguise as though it were transparent," replied Deering.

"And yet I have passed for Dame Grindle with those whose eyes are not of the dullest. A quaint old hunchback, who knows you, Guy, believes me, for all the world, to be Dame Grindle."

"One does not always know the thoughts of others," said the young man, gazing fondly at the sweet face that was already blushing at his earnestness. "The old swordmaker might have been wiser than you thought him. But tell me, Judith, why you are thus masquerading?"

A glow on the maiden's cheeks deepened. She reflected before answering.

"It seems to me," she said, "that you know something of this without my telling. It comes to me—no one has told me—that there is a mysterious connection between you and the old man Hirl. He gave you the saw; he refused gold, and a strange emotion shook him as I appealed to his sympathy for the spy."

"It was not an ingenuous question," answered Deering, in a deep and kindly voice, "to ask concerning this disguise. Yes, Judith, I know what you have done. The old man whispered it to me through the cabin wall, and my admiration and gratitude were such that I wished to lie down at your feet and die for you. Did the old churl tell you?"

"Churl! For shame, Guy! Call him not such a name," exclaimed Judith. "He is a noble old man, and a deep. He saved you, he saved Somerton, and he has saved me!"

"Such a boss as dat yer mare is, nebber was seen! She goes an' she goes as though the debble hisself was in dem legs o' hern!" interposed Meg, who was disposed to be ele-

quent respecting Hirl's mare. "He's jest the queerest old granddaddy! Sometimes he squeaks like a fife; den ag'in, his vice runs o'ar down into his stomach like a bassoon. Sometimes he can't hear t'under; den, bime-by, he'll hear de soft little vice o' Miss Judith. 'Deed he will!'"

Guy Deering smiled.

"Those bright eyes were not given the wench for nothing," he said; then turning seriously to Judith, added: "Why are you here? Were you not instructed to cross the clearing, and reach home without delay? What has happened? You could not have been intercepted by the tories, for they went not that way. They should be concealed in that wood."

"We encountered a horrible danger. That black demon, Jaffer, of whose enormities you have heard, and from whose hands we escaped last night, was lying in wait down in the bottom-land beside the brook. We attempted to go around by the river, but were intercepted by the outlaw Hadley. This is why I am here. Now it is my turn to question: Why do you tarry in the midst of danger? There is a price on your head! You are like Cain; he that finds you may slay you. O Guy Deering! was it for this that I loved you, with your noble powers, your generous impulses? How could you adopt a life so infamous? If you must indeed be an enemy of freedom, why not enter the ranks and fight like a man for your cause? One may respect an open enemy."

Deering's head sank lower and lower, till his chin rested upon his chest. He sighed, and looked at Judith as one asking pity and mercy.

"Spies," he muttered, "are the indispensable attendants of war; they are employed by both armies. You will find them in the camp of Washington, and in the camp of Cornwallis. If we do according to our consciences, what matters our employment?"

"Leave me, Guy Deering! leave me forever!" cried Judith, with sudden vehemence. "Never come into my presence again. You are infamous! you are infamous!"

Judith shrank from Deering, shuddering and angry.

Deering's face grew pallid. All the life seemed to have gone out of his athletic body. There was no moisture in his eyes; they were cold and glassy, and fixed vacantly on Judith. His hands hung at his side despairingly. He heard the words "Infamous! infamous!" ringing in his ears. He knew what voice uttered them; that was what struck him to the heart. While he felt the steel, he would have kissed the hand that struck.

Judith grew handsomer, taller, stronger, prouder, braver, and more adorable. Presently, Deering raised his hands with the palms turned entreatingly to Judith. The motion was terribly eloquent. She interpreted the meaning.

"Spare you? No! Have you spared me? Have you not turned my love into a curse? Have I not borne contumely and reproach for you? O Guy Deering! if you had died in the battles of liberty, I should have been spared this agony—this blushing, burning, blighting shame!"

The spy raised his hands higher, till they appealed not to the human but to the superhuman—God.

Judith stood panting and flashing at him like lightning.

"I have done with weakness," she went on. "This confession from you and its lame justification has opened my eyes. I will pray for you—I will try to forgive you; but with my consent we shall never meet again. Go, Guy Deering, to those miscreants in whose unholy service you are, and forget Judith Redmond."

The measured gallop of horses was heard. Deering did not heed it. He felt that no greater calamity could happen.

Tramp! tramp! Clatter! clatter! The sounds drew nearer.

"Go!" said Judith. "It may be those whom you would not care to see."

Deering did not stir. Judith looked up the wagon-road, and saw two horsemen, they were Sergeant Giles and the chaplain.

"Go! go!" cried Judith. "They are enemies indeed, for they are from Somerton's camp. To me, they bring safety, to you, death!"

"Death!" repeated Deering, in a hollow voice. "Yes, it is death; I have received

the sentence from your lips. Let them come; I care not for life."

"What! will you not obey one request of mine? Is this your love, that you stay when I bid you go? Would you revenge yourself on me by dying at my feet?"

"Revenge? No, no!" I would not give you such pain," answered the spy, his generous impulses recalled by her words. He glanced along the narrow vista of the road, and saw Giles and the chaplain. Judith pointed imploringly to the forest. He gave her an earnest, mournful look, and gathering his cloak about him, and drawing his hat over his brow, walked swiftly away.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SERGEANT AND THE CHAPLAIN.

"Who's that runnin' away?" demanded the sergeant, with more than usual bluster, as he drew up his horse, by a powerful pull at the bridle, close to Judith.

"Dear me! how reckless you sojer-lads do ride! But, arter all, it's a good thing to be in a hurry, for the wheels o' time are rollin' at sich a rapid rate. We shall soon be clods o' the valley, sergeant," said Judith, in a cracked voice, and with a highly instructive manner.

"Confound the wheels o' time and the clods o' the valley!" quoth Jim Giles, in military rage. "I see a man dash into the woods as we were comin' this way, and I want to know if you're holdin' correspondence with the enemy."

"'Twas a friend ob de family, I 'spect," said Meg, wriggling and grinning.

"It's a swift pair of heels that can't be overtaken!" said Giles, stoutly, and, striking his spurs into his horse, dashed off in the direction that Deering had disappeared, with more speed than caution, and to the no small hazard of running against a tree, or transfixing himself upon a limb. He was absent but a few moments, and came back in a great mental heat. Planting himself directly before Goody Grindle, he frowned in a sinister fashion, shaking his finger at her mysteriously.

"I set ye down for a mischief-makin' witch the first time I put eyes on ye, and now I've got proof on't. I'll report ye, mum, to Cap'n Rainford and the colonel, providin' he ever turns up ag'in," he was good enough to say, in the most rebuking manner he could assume.

"Lor', sergeant! you'll scar' Miss Bessy to death!" cried Meg.

"Of what grave crime do you accuse the good woman?" inquired the chaplain, who had ridden to the spot more deliberately, and had till this moment sat gravely and silently upon his horse.

"Of treason, Parson Humphrey! Who do you think, my gentleman, was that was runnin' away? 'Twas the spy, sir!—'twas Deering!—the lad whose palms have sich an itch-in' for British gold!" replied Giles, with a great flourish of virtuous indignation.

"Is this so?" demanded Humphrey, sternly, turning his hard, impassive face upon Judith.

"It's little satisfaction that you'll git of a woman, parson. A wild goose never laid a tame egg," said the sergeant, banging his sword against the pommel of his saddle.

"Be not over-hasty, sergeant, for the woman hath not yet spoken yea or nay; and there may be some error in thy judgment. Let us act in the fear of God, and George Washington, and the Continental Congress. Hold thy peace, while I question her in a proper and becoming fashion."

Then addressing Judith: "Be not stricken with fear, worthy spinster; for the soldiers of liberty scorn to take advantage of woman's weakness. Tell me truly—and thy candor shall not go for nothing, should the colonel think it his duty to inquire into this matter—was it indeed that man of Belial, Guy Deering, that but now fled from hence? A lie, though it promise good, will do thee harm; and truth will do thee good at the last."

"Goodness gracious, Parson Humphrey! what a sarmont you're preachin'! As for the matter of bein' skeered, you might saved yourself the trouble of talkin' about it. The Lord love ye! do ye s'pose Betsey Grindle is afeard of a blusterin' little sergeant and a slow-goin' parson?"

Sergeant Giles scowled terrifically; but

Humphrey's countenance did not change in the slightest particular.

"I could told ye at fust, if you'd only asked me, that 'twas as honest a lad as ever walked that left me as you come thunderin' up. Why, that was young Deering that used to come sparkin' my niece afore things come to sich a dreadful pass as they are now. Ah, me! how the world changes! The wheels o' time are rollin' us away, and we shall soon be clods o' the valley."

"Woman, you either know a great deal, or you don't know much!" cried Humphrey.

"A wise man knows the fool, but the fool don't know the wise man," said Giles, unbending his brows a trifle.

"Goodness, parson! you look as though you could put a whole rigiment to flight," added Judith—who, to do her justice, took the character of her maiden-aunt with remarkable truthfulness to life. "Proper glad you and the sergeant have come, for I've got a nice little job for you to do—a couple on 'em, for that matter. The fust is, to go down where you see them tall cypresses, and cut up about a dozen tories that are led by that wicked creetur, Christian Hadley."

The sergeant began to cool, and the chaplain looked searchingly toward the cypress growth.

"You're so bold, and speak up so sharp and courageous to two lone women—one of 'em nothin' but a yaller gal—that you're capable of anythin', and won't mind that hand-ful o' men more'n you would a handful o' hazel-nuts. Then, there's Colonel Somerton bleedin' his life away for nothin', when he oughter be at the squire's in bed, with a room full of army-surgeons round him."

"Good woman, your words astonish me!" said Humphrey.

"Don't 'good woman' me; for the Bible says, 'there's none good—no, not one.' The colonel was saved, and no thanks to you nor the fiery sargeant, but to the Swordmaker of the Santee, who brought him away from Christian Hadley's camp in his cart, as fit for nothin' but to bury. 'Pearances are deceptive, and so was the colonel."

"Sergeant Giles, we're stupid fellows," said Humphrey, thoughtfully. "We've been taking this loquacious housewife to task, and it turns out that she has more useful information than the whole brigade. Worthy dame, can you inform us where to find Colonel Somerton?"

The chaplain glanced uneasily toward the cover of the tories. By rising in his stirrups, he could catch a glimpse of their horses on the margin of the canebrake.

"He's about a mile from here, by the side of this wagon-road, on the right; but you needn't trouble yourselves—Old Hirl'll look arter him. He's one o' the wonderfulest old men you ever see. He isn't handsome; and there's a bunch on his back most as large as the sergeant. What he undertakes he goes through with. But the wheels o' time are rollin' him away, and he'll soon be a clod of the valley."

"He hath need of a long spoon that supe with the devil!" quoth Giles, mysteriously.

A shuffling step was heard, and the hunchback was discovered turning down the road. He evinced no surprise at seeing the parties.

"Hurry up, old man," said Giles; hurry up, and open your budget!"

But Hirl was not in a mood to hear readily, and advanced, muttering:

"Allers in trouble—allers! Fust it's one thing, then another. If 'tisn't neuralagy, it's rheumatics; if 'tisn't rheumatics, it's agur, or some other eperdemie."

He stopped near the sergeant, and leaned on his long musket.

"Fine times these, when the sojers o' liberty has nothin' to do but ride about. Now, 'f I's one o' Somerton's drago'ns, I wouldn't be loiterin' about when there's sich an almighty host of mean creeturs to be carved. Why in the name o' Washin'ton don't ye drive your spurs into them great hulks o' hosses, and fly right straight at the enemy, to cut an' to slash, to bagonet an' to stick, to shoot an' to smash, to lance an' to gash, till the Merican eagle flops its wings, and crows itself into fits? Ah, if I was on'y young an' actyve!"

"Brag is a good dog, but Holdfast is better," sneered Giles.

Hirl took up his musket, examined the lock, and then limped round a little, apparently self-absorbed, or lost in some erratic

foxy that wouldn't let him rest. By-and-by, he came out, or rather leaped suddenly from this abstraction, and, turning abruptly upon Humphrey and Giles, shrieked:

"Why do ye stay when every minute is precious? Back to Rainford, and tell him Somerton is alive, and that he (Rainford) is expected to do duty for both! Back, and tell him to charge upon the camp of the Tories in the swamp while Hadley is away! Tell him to give no quarter, but to swing the sabre without mercy; for they are robbers, murderers, all!"

The swordmaker paused—exhausted, apparently, by his extraordinary vehemence. Each of the parties looked at him with surprise.

"Tell him, also," resumed Hirl, "to send a dozen troopers down to Squire Redmond's; for his house is beset, and he and his are in danger!"

"Are these your orders or the colonel's?" demanded the sergeant, coolly.

"The colonel's," answered Hirl, quickly. "And if I've repeated 'em once to myself, I've repeated 'em forty times, so I could deliver 'em word for word; and I believe I've done it. I was goin' to find Cap'n Rainford myself, but there won't be no need on't now, if you 'tend to the business as you ought to. Don't fear 'bout Somerton, for I'll take him to the squire's in my cart, soon's there's a chance to do it. So, scamper; lad's, scamper!"

The chaplain rode close to Judith, and bending from the saddle, whispered into the great bonnet that disguised the pretty face.

"Can this man be trusted? Ought we to deliver this message, think you, good woman?"

"He is an oracle! Follow his directions to the letter—for I know enough of him to have the strongest confidence in what he says."

"Truly, his mind seemeth greatly shattered and befogged; but the Lord sometimes uses feeble instrumentalities to accomplish mighty works; so I will even do the old man's bidding in much haste."

While this whispered conversation was going on, the swordmaker limped round again in a circle, dragging his musket after him.

"My name is Hirl—Hirl for short—though ill-mannered people call me Old Hirl, Deef Hirl, Crazy Hirl, and sich. No matter, no t'ing shall live jest as long for't. 'Tisn't every one can put sich a temper into steel as I can, or sich an edge to a sword, or sich a p'int to a bagonet."

"And 'tisn't every one that has sich a hump on his back!" said Giles, turning his horse and following the chaplain, who was already in motion.

"Ride fast, boys, ride fast, and deliver the colonel's message jest as I told it to you," admonished Hirl.

Humphrey checked his horse, and asked Judith, over his shoulder, if she was safe in that exposed situation, alone?

She pointed to the swordmaker, and said, with a smile:

"I have a protector."

"To the death! to the death!" muttered Hirl; and the chaplain and the sergeant galloped away.

CHAPTER XIV.

BLACK JAFFER FINDS SOMERTON.

Somerton reflected a long time about his chance interview with the man who persisted in calling himself Max Henderson. He could not divest himself of the idea that the character in which that person had been taken, was the true one; in short, that he was a spy whatever name he might choose to assume. The colonel's heart, despite his high notions of duty, warmed a little toward him, and tried to find reasons for his conduct. His first impressions were the clearest and the best—for the more he speculated, the more he became confused.

Hearing some one coming, he sat up and looked from his covert, thinking it might be the swordmaker. But it was not; it was Jaffer who, tired of watching, was on his way back to his lair, having reached the road by a secret path, trodden only by himself and a few other runaways. Jaffer was not in good humor, having been twice disappointed—once the previous night, once that day. He was returning, growling like a mastiff robbed of his bone.

At the spot where the swordmaker had stopped his cart and helped the colonel out, there was a little trail of blood, that had

trickled from the latter's arm. The negro's eyes rested upon this trail, and stooping till he resembled a great black dog, he followed it. This was unpleasant. However brave a man may be constitutionally, there are situations in which he may feel nervous and uncomfortable without reproach to his manhood. Loss of blood and weakness robs a man of a portion of his firmness. Somerton could not remember that he ever experienced such a singular feeling of awe and repugnance. A full-blooded black is seldom a very agreeable object to contemplate, even when his features are not exaggerated, but when his nose is of the flattest, his forehead of the lowest, and his lips of the thickest, with a savage nature to match, and a long knife in his girdle, he is positively repulsive. The colonel was of this opinion, and grew stronger in it as Jaffer drew nearer, dilating his nostrils, and smelling like a hound. Somerton thought of the pistol that Henderson had dropped beside him, and stretching out his hand, grasped it with a feeling of relief. It was primed. Cautiously cocking it, he concealed it beneath the skirt of his coat.

Jaffer scented game. Lifting his black and half nude body, he peered into the pines. His white eyes rolled with sudden eagerness, for they rested upon the gold epaulettes and bright buttons of the officer. Cunning and cupidity were instantly at work. That the officer was wounded, he assured himself by a closer approach, and so far as he could determine, unarmed. There was a period of doubt with the negro; the doubt did not arise from any want of purpose, but related wholly to the colonel's ability or inability to defend himself. A glance at the latter's bandaged arm, saturated hair, and begrimed and haggard face, settled everything in the mind of the black, who now assumed a most sinister attitude. He had thrust forward a large, bare foot, laid his right hand on the handle of his knife, and thrown forward his muscular body. A white row of shovel-teeth gleamed through two inches of red lip. This animal looked apish and horrible. There was no need of speech; his purpose was patent all over him.

Somerton watched him with a steady gaze. He saw the muscles of his arms begin to swell and quiver, and knew that he was about to fly at him. His pistol came from its hiding-place, and to a line with the great bundle of animal in a second, and the report followed as quickly. There was first a roar, then a howl, then much crashing and floundering in the bushes. Somerton thought he was done for, but after rolling about, and somersaulting a little while, Jaffer got up and went moaning away, the courage entirely taken out of him.

Somerton sank upon the ground entirely exhausted. For a time he lost consciousness. He neither heard Giles nor Humphrey come on, though they passed close to his concealment. The voice of the swordmaker was the first thing he sensed. The empty pistol in his hand, the trampled and stained grass, and the bushes beaten down, assured the old man that something had happened. He took the weapon and examined it, muttering:

"He's been here! he's been here! It was well for the colonel. Come, sir," he added, in a louder voice, "rouse yourself—rouse yourself! I've come arter ye, and brought ye somethin' to put life into ye. 'Tis brandy, kurnil; take a good swig on't."

The officer eagerly drank from the flask which Hirl held to his lips. It was like drinking in new life. He felt a warm glow in his stomach and blood, and presently an encouraging exhilaration of spirits.

"It's a good medicine," said the swordmaker, "if it isn't used too common; but like fire, it becomes a hard master when it once gets the upper hand. Now your eyes begin to flash, and your heart begins to glow, as natur' intended it. What's been goin' on? It looks round here as if a bear had been turnin' summersets, and pitch-polin' about ginerly."

Somerton sat up and endeavored to explain what had occurred.

"It was black Jaffer!" said Hirl, shutting his teeth hard together. "I hope you split his rascally heart, for a wickeder creetur never run away from a plantation or hid in a swamp. But where'd you git this leetle weepin'?"

The swordmaker twirled the pistol in his hand.

"That's the strangest part of it. Though

you were a Yankee, you couldn't guess. It was the spy who escaped in some unaccountable way from the cabin last night. Yes, the very man that swam the river and led me such a chase. Yes, the man that I hunted down like a stag, and would have hanged like a dog, found me here and did not kill me, though he stood over me armed, and I utterly at his mercy. Nay, more, he left me a weapon which saved me from the clutches of that execrable black. Now, sir, what do you make of all this?"

"I make neither head nor tail on't. P'r'ape he wasn't Guy Deerin' at all, and you ketched the wrong dog by the ear when you caged him up; though his conduct was mighty queer. If he'd been an honest lad, he wouldn't run a step at sight of you and your dragoons."

"I'm not sure on that point, old man. Suspicion is sometimes as bad in its consequences as actual guilt. The cry of 'mad dog' was fatal to poor Tray. Set you out in the field, with forty rods the start, and let my fellows dash after you, shouting 'A spy! a spy!' and you'd be likely to take to the bush, guilty or innocent. I mean to say, that the fact of your running wouldn't be sufficient evidence to hang you."

"Right, sir, right!" said Hirl, with notable earnestness, his mind wandering, apparently, to some other time and place.

"I've sent your orders, kurnil, word for word, as well as I could remember 'em; and my mem'ry, considerin' my age, is uncommon," he added, while Somerton was yet wondering at the impressiveness of his last remark.

"Orders?" he repeated, inquiringly. "I have given no orders; nor have I been in a condition to for the last twelve hours."

"Jes' so! But I remembered that you told me to keep sayin' 'em over so I did," said Hirl, with a chuckle of satisfaction. "I fell in," he went on, "with the sergeant feller and the parson, and sent the whole budget by them. Sez I, 'The kurnil wants ye to charge right into the thickest of them Tories, an' cut an' slash, an' smite an' smash, an' lance an' gash, till they take to their heels like a streak o' daylight arter sundown. And tell 'em,' sez I, 'that the kurnil says, that the miscreant' (that was the term that I believe you made use on)—'that the miscreant, Hadley, with a small force, is lurkin' about Squire Redmond's plantation, with a view to run off his cattle, and hosses, and p'r'aps steal the gals, too; an' you'd better send down a handful o' men to disperse 'em.' I told 'em to tell the cap'n not to be consarned about ye; for you'd be taken care on at the squire's soon as you could be got there."

"I think," answered Somerton, with a smile, "that you remember my orders much better than I do myself! However, I don't really think I could have given better; so I'm obliged to ye, Mr. Swordmaker, and hope 'em 'll be obeyed."

"Yes; I used to have a fam'ous mem'ry when I went to school. There wasn't a boy could remember how many floggin's they got well as I could. You see, I carried 'em all in my head, same as I would a sum in edition. For instance: so many knocks 'cross the knuckles, so many twacks over the head, so many cuts 'cross the back, so many tweaks o' the ears an' nose, and so many reg'lar dressin' downs. Take another leetle gulp, kurnil. It's jest the revivin'est thing in case o' sickness by sword-jabs or bagonet-sticks that was ever interduced to the public. 'Tis, by Satan!"

Hirl lifted the officer from the ground, talking the while in his quaint way.

"Now if you feel weak, as 'twere, 'n the jints o' your limbs, I'll whip ye right square on to my back, and take ye away, as Sampson trotted off the gates of the Philistines. You can set on my hump, if you want to, for it's firmer nor the Bank o' England, and has allers stuck to me, thus fur, like a brother. It's a permanent institution, and there's no danger of it's slippin' down or turnin', like a saddle. Natur' buckled it on tormented tight, I tell ye."

Somerton laughed, and felt better for the brandy and the talk.

"'Twas a wonderful 'fiction at fust, 'specially when I see it growin' bigger an' bigger every day. Sometimes, I didn't know whether I b'longed to it, or it b'longed to me; but finally I sorter settled down under, like an ant carvin' an egg, and I don't know how I should

git along 'thout it now. I've had doctors an' doctors; but 'twan't no manner o' use. Some of 'em snickered and said they didn't know whether 'twas best to cut me off of it or not; and they scurcely knew which part to save, if they tackled me."

By this time the swordmaker had got the officer to the cart, and into it. They rolled toward the plantation; but turned into a by-road, just before they came within sight of it.

"We shall have a good chance from here," said Hirl, "to see your dragoons show their grit and their military p'int; and we sha'n't have to wait long, neither, 'less I've miscalculated the distance. If there's anything that I like to see, it's a charge of *calvary*."

Somerton smiled, and regarded the unconscious face of the swordmaker with interest.

At the expiration of half-an-hour, the clatter of hoofs announced the approach of the expected party. Leaving the colonel, Hirl ran to the middle of the road, and hailed the dragoons as they came up. They were led by Giles—the chaplain attending, as a volunteer. There were thirteen of them, the latter included.

"Hold up, so lad!" cried the swordmaker, addressing Giles.

"The king's business requires haste, and you'll please get out o' the road, my fine old gentleman," replied the sergeant.

"I like not to hear you speak of the king's business," said the chaplain, gravely, "for we are in the service of God, and the Continental Congress, and George Washington."

"Goslings lead the geese to water," retorted Giles, with great wisdom; "but parsons don't lead the dragoons to a charge, nor dictate to old campaigners. Old hunchback, stand from under!"

The last period, of course, was directed at Hirl, who, planted firmly in the road, with his old musket, with its long, ugly bayonet, seemed to dispute farther progress.

"The greater haste, the less speed, if provverbs ye must have!" retorted Hirl, composedly. "If you'd only be patient, and hear what a body has to say, afore castin' your wise sayin's into his teeth, you'd save both time and breath—maybe, a blunder or two. I want an escort for a wounded man, as fur as Squire Redmond's."

"Out o' the way, swordmaker! We can't stop for wounded men; for our business is to make more o' that sort. Captain Rainford is by this time ridin' full tilt through the tory camp, and there's great doin's in the cypress-brake. I'm achin' to lay hands on Christian Hadley; so give us a clear course, that we may sooner be at the work of crackin' skulls, which is a good business when well follered."

"Stop one moment, friend Giles. The rider shouldn't go faster than his horse," said the chaplain. "Old man," he added to the swordmaker, "what is the name of this wounded person for whom you want an escort? Our force, you perceive, is small—we can ill spare a single dragoon."

"It's nobody but the kurnil!" cried Hirl. "Colonel Somerton! Why the devil didn't you say so?" roared the sergeant.

"Nay! thou shouldst not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain!" remonstrated Humphrey.

"Jes' so!" said Hirl, shouldering his musket. "I knowed you'd think it worth while to pay a little attention to the kurnil, who's out yonder in the cart, as mild as a lamb, as patient as a suckin' dove, and nighabout as weak. This way, you fiery dragoons. Don't tread onto me with your rampaganous creetur! You see I can't go so fast as I used to could when my legs was strangers to the rheumatics. Lord love ye, sergeant, if I was as I was twenty years ago and up'ard—and it may be nigher thirty, now I come to think on't—I'd buy jest the smartest creetur in the way of four-footed hoss, that could be found in the whole length and breadth of the land, and I'd saddle him, and I'd bridle him, and I'd git me a sword, and a pistil, and a gun and a bagonet, and a hoss-trumpet, and I'd run sich a rig, and blow sich blasts up an' down the Santee, that the goddess o' liberty would jest throw down her cap, and tread on't. I would, by Satan!"

In making this stirring speech, the swordmaker stopped short in the path, and got so excited, that he came near stabbing the sergeant's horse with his bayonet. For a moment, he appeared transformed into a declamatory old dragon.

"Go 'long, you old crazy-head! You'll do some mischief yet with that toad-sticker. I've heerd ye talk afore, but I never see ye do nothin'." 'Tisn't talkin', my old man-mountain, that gives us the victory; but the real give-an'-take, rough-an'-tumble fightin' that does the work. Toddle on, mister; toddle on."

The old man limped forward with such zeal, that the parties were soon beside the cart.

"How are you, brave lads?" said the colonel.

"Upon my word, I'm glad to see you! I've had a hard time since I was captured by Hadley; but, thanks to this good man, I'm in a fair way to lead you to victory again in a few days. My wounds, I trust, are not very serious."

"We'd given ye up for lost at the camp," replied Giles. "Rainford felt mighty bad; and so we all did, for that matter. The cap'n said he'd s'arch high and low but he'd find ye, dead or alive. He was ready to hug me when told him that we'd fell in with the hunchback, and you's alive. The orders you sent are bein' obeyed. Before this time, Rainford is hackin' away at the tories."

"I thank you all for your solicitude on my account. Now, sergeant, ride down yonder, and feel of those fellows in the cypresses. When you have put them to flight, come to me for further orders. Ah, here is Chaplain Humphrey! Humphrey, how do you do?"

"As well as the Lord wills," said the chaplain, grimly. "I'm a rough soldier of the cross and of Washington, and ought not to complain of troubles and trials that endure but for a day; and which will, in the end, bring joy and gladness. Colonel, with your permission, I will charge with the sergeant; for, it is my belief, that steel may be used in a good cause, and, when wielded stoutly and prayerfully, put the men of Belial in salutary fear, causing them to look more heedfully to their ways, and to keep in view the latter end of the wicked."

The sergeant made a movement to go. "Don't be in a hurry, soger-creeturs! Guess I'd better make a little bit of a speech afore ye smash into 'em."

Hirl mounted his cart; and holding his old hat in his left hand, and his musket in the other, said:

"Fiery dragoons, your enemies is yonder. They are wrong, and you are right. They fight for plunder—you for liberty! There's a great difference in your principles in the sight o' God, and that's everything in a fight. Remember all you've ever heerd about the goddess o' liberty and the eagle o' freedom."

"The hunchback has turned parson!" muttered Giles.

"He might have said something not as much to the point," said Humphrey.

"Come on, boys!" cried the sergeant, and off went the dragoons.

CHAPTER XV.

AT THE PLANTATION.

Somerton and the swordmaker watched the progress of Giles with interest. At first, he was hidden by trees; but presently breaking cover, he was in sight of both them and the enemy, and pressed forward at a gallop. The dragoons were met at the margin of the cypress growth by a volley of pistols and muskets, but dashed in upon the tories in gallant style. The latter had had sufficient warning of the sergeant's approach to mount and prepare for resistance. As the dragoons entered the wood, Hadley cheered his men, and a sharp conflict followed. Somerton heard with impatience the shouts of the combatants, the ringing of sabres, and occasionally the reverberating sound of musketry. His martial spirit was aroused. He felt mechanically for his sword, but a twinge of pain in the arm that was wont to wield it, reminded him of the humiliating fact that he was wounded and helpless.

The royalists yielded ground, and were finally driven from the cypresses into the open space between them and the cane-brake, where they made a brief stand. Being hotly pressed, and some of their number slain, they put spurs to their horses, and sought safety in flight. The grim figure of the chaplain was observed by Somerton to be the first and most headlong in pursuit.

"He wields the sword full better than he preaches the word," said the colonel, with a smile.

The old man stood grasping his musket with both hands, his face turned with intense eagerness toward the scene of the affray. The remark of the officer aroused him.

"Yes; he fights the battles of the Lord in right-down airnest. See! he is close at the heels of Hadley. I shouldn't wonder if he took the creetur! Observe that weepin' o' his glitter in the sun! It is as powerful as the sword of the spirit to the cleavin' asunder of j'int and marrer, flesh and sinews. The tories have reached the road, as many of 'em as are left. And now, kurnil, we'll be movin'. Can you set on a hoss?"

"What horse?" asked Somerton, dubiously.

"Crazy, of course! A mare's a hoss, I s'pose," replied Hirl, beginning to detach Crazy from the cart, while the colonel considered the animal with not a little distrust and uneasiness; for the creature's bones looked uncomfortably near the surface.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed the officer; "the beast can't sustain my weight."

"If you break her down, you'll be obleeged to pay damages, that's all. She's too vallyable a creetur to be throwed away, as 'twere. But you'll find her backbone pooty toler'ble strong, I reckon. I'll lead her up aside the cart, and you can tumble on from the wheel. If you can stick on, you'll do well enough. If I had a saddle, I'd offer it to ye with pleasure; but she isn't as sharp as a knife, kurnil, and you may find a harder seat afore ye die."

With a wry face, the colonel mounted Crazy from the cart; and the valorous knight of La Mancha never cut a more sorrowful figure on the famed steed Rosinante.

"Your sweetheart oughter see ye," said Hirl, with a quiet chuckle. "Hark!" he added, quickly; "they're at it again; there's fightin' in the road. Come on! I'll throw down the fences, and we'll go across the fields."

Somerton submitted to this arrangement, and followed the old man with as much philosophy as he could call to his aid. With Hirl limping along before him, he crossed a field, and found himself presently in the road leading to Redmond's residence.

The din and confusion in the forest had greatly increased.

"Something new has happened," said Somerton. "All that noise is not produced by Giles and his twelve men."

"You are right, kurnil; others have j'ined the battle. Look! the fiery dragoons are retreatin' from the woods. They come this way! The tories are gittin' the best on't. What does it mean, I wonder?"

"That Hadley has received reinforcements from his camp. Perhaps the whole nest of them are retreating before Rainford."

"Right, kurnil! I can hear the muskets of your brave lads," answered the swordmaker.

"But what is that?" exclaimed Somerton, casting his eyes in the opposite direction.

"It is the advance guard of Tarleton's legion, by heavens!" cried the hunchback, with startling energy.

"Old man, you have a singular faculty of knowing the movements of the enemy," replied the colonel, suspiciously.

"Hurry, kurnil, hurry, for there's no time to lose! Them fellers restin' on the skirt o' the wood yender b'long to Tarleton, and there'll be hot work. No tellin' who'll occupy Redmond's house by sunset."

"We need Marion!—we need Marion!" exclaimed Somerton.

"You shall have him! The sergeant and the chaplain, with as many of the dozen as survive, come clatterin' arter us. Well, you'll need 'em as a body-guard. The best thing you can do is to post 'em round the house to keep it from bein' plundered, till the day is decided."

"You take it for granted that there will be a battle."

"I do," replied Hirl. "I know there'll be a battle. Already Tarleton exults in the thought of victory; but Marion, sir—Marion and his men will rob the dog of his bone, and he'll go away growlin'."

"I hope your words are prophetic; but if Tarleton comes to the scratch, I assure you, old man, I'll have a hand in it. Though I had twenty wounds, I would not lie in bed, and hear the conflict, without guiding and aiding it by my presence and authority."

Giles and the chaplain rode up, panting, with numerous marks of the skirmish on their

persons. Somerton ordered Giles to collect as many of his comrades as he could find, and await his further commands at Redmond's, whose house they were now near. As the swordmaker was climbing the eminence on which it stood, Judith suddenly appeared before him. The old man stopped as quickly as if an enemy had met him at a charge bayonet.

"Colonel Somerton is welcome," she said, with a friendly smile, and a graceful courtesy to that officer. Then, in a hurried, half-whispered voice to Hirl, "It seems that my worthy aunt has been masquerading. If you value her friendship, or my good-will, do not, in any manner, refer to any knowledge you may have of her conduct since yesterday."

"Be at your ease," answered the swordmaker, in the same tone. "I comprehend—I'll obey your wishes." Then, raising his voice, "My name is Hirl; Hirl, for short, though ill-mannered people call me Old Hirl Deef Hirl, Crazy Hirl, and sich."

"My Aunt Grindle," resumed Judith, "is eccentric in her notions, and peculiar in her disposition. Remember not to allude to her visit to Somerton's camp, nor its charitable object, nor her subsequent meeting with you."

"Don't be afraid; I can take a hint about as quick as any individual in these parts. You're proper skeerd about the old lady, I s'pose? Well, no wonder. When I found her, she's in as sorry a plight as any livin' she I ever fell in with. She was scootin' about in the woods like a wild creetur, with scarcely a rag o' clothes on her. Bless your soul, Miss Judith, she was nighabout tore to bits!"

"I was not aware," answered Judith, blushing, "that she was reduced to such an extremity."

"Goodness gracious! you hain't no idee on't. Why, the tories got hold of her, and I guess atween you and I, they made sad work with her."

The swordmaker cast a sidelong glance at Miss Redmond, whose vexation was apparent.

"She's a mighty queer old body," continued Hirl. "She talked 'bout the wheels o' time and the clods o' the valley, cut up the yaller gal with her switch, and made her take snuff for lookin' at the sogers."

Judith smiled. The swordmaker went on in a more confidential tone.

"You can keep a secret, I s'pose, miss? Sartin. I thought you could. Well, I don't mind tellin' ye that Goody Grindle took a great shine to me. Expected every minute she'd pop the question, not knowin' that I ain't in the market, nor haven't been for the last thirty year. You'd oughter seen her a settin' on the cart aside me. Lord! she snuggled up to me like a kitten to a warm chimney!"

Hirl looked archly at Judith.

"Tis false, old man!" she retorted, in a suppressed and hurried tone. "Do not destroy the merit of a good action by mean and petty slander. I thought you were better, sir!"

"Yes, I am some better; but not so better as I was. The rheumatics and the doxology worry me woundedly; but I git along very well, for the most part, with the help o' Crazy."

"I say you slander my aunt foully!" exclaimed Judith, scarcely knowing whether to weep with vexation, or laugh at the old man's ridiculous story. She glanced at the hump on his back, his gray hairs, and bent figure, and wondered at his self-complacency.

"She's a sharp one, is Goody Grindle! But Lord love you, what a breath!"

The blood rushed tumultuously to Miss Redmond's cheeks. She darted a keen, angry look at the old traducer.

"There's somethin' extr'ordiner about it, but I've allers noticed that an old maid's breath isn't by no means up to the mark in the way o' sweetness."

Hirl squinted mischievously at his fair companion.

"Now yours, Miss Judith, is like the scent of new-mow'd hay, and flutters from your pooty mouth like the softest south wind."

Judith laughed.

"You can both slander and flatter, old man!" she cried, flitting lightly away to meet her father, who was approaching to welcome the colonel.

"Colonel Somerton," he said, taking that officer's hand, "everything that I have is at your service; but God only knows how long I shall have shelter or substance to offer to my friends."

"The times are indeed troublous," answered Somerton, and might prevail over right. But I trust that the colonists do not fight their battles alone, and that there is One greater than man to sustain and grant them the victory."

"Such is my belief," replied Redmond.

"Here comes my aunt," said Judith, looking significantly at Hirl; then, as if suddenly recollecting herself, added.

"How stupid! Your silly conversation, old man, had nearly made me forget to warn Colonel Somerton."

"Speak to him as I help him from the mare," replied Hirl.

Judith availed herself of this hint, and whispered to Somerton, while pretending to give him the support of her arm. What she said appeared to perplex him, and he stared at her in a very singular manner for a gentleman of his approved gallantry. Something mysterious had got into his mind, that he could not conveniently rid himself of.

"Do, brother, for pity sake, make haste!" cried a sharp, imperative voice—the real voice of the real Betsey Grindle. "The poor man will bleed to death afore you git him into the house. Bless us, how pale he is! Judith, child, you're doin' more hurt than good. How do you s'pose your foolish little arm can support sich a great giant of a Continental soger?"

Judith relinquished her place to the chaplain, after whispering: "Be cautious, sir, I beg of you; which admonition evidently referred to something previously communicated."

"Meg! Meg! you trollop! is everything ready? Lawful sakes! He hasn't got an atom o' blood in his veins, not an atom! I do believe the wheels o' time will roll him into the valley afore we can git the lint scraped."

The wounded officer stopped short on the threshold, and looked fixedly at Dame Grindle. The mystery and bewilderment that had crept into his brain, were manifestly in no manner lessened. He glanced at Judith, then at Meg, then at the swordmaker, then suffered himself to be conducted in by the chaplain and Giles.

"This way, my bold Continentals," added Goody Grindle, who was clearly one of those persons intended on all occasions to do all the talking and bustling about, and be perpetually busy. "I've got the nicest bed made for him! I hope, colonel, that your gun-shot and bagonet wounds ain't mortal. But life is but a span. We shan't none on us be here long. The wheels o' time are rollin' us to the clods o' the valley. We shall soon all be clods; you'll be a clod, and I'll be a clod, and both Britisher and Continental will be alike at last. Dear me! lay him down on the bed and take off his boots. A man don't want boots and spurs on, when all the blood in his system has been drained out of him by the rotten tories. I hate 'em as I do snakes!"

Goody Grindle made a dive at Somerton's coat-sleeve, and ripped it open with a large pair of shears from the shoulder to the wrist, before he had time to decide whether he was the subject of a hostile or friendly assault.

"Heaven be good to us!" she rattled on, rolling up his shirt-sleeve. "What a cut they've made in his white arm!"

"My good woman," said the chaplain, gravely, "I have some small skill in surgery, which—"

"Well, I should think it might be very small, indeed!" interrupted the impetuous spinster. "You have that look. Meg! lint!"

"I was going to say," added Humphrey, with a frown, "that I had some little skill in surgery, which, by the blessing of God, has been of great service to the poor fellows of our brigade. If it be the pleasure of our commander, I will even try my hand upon him."

"Meg! save!" cried Goody Grindle, with a decisiveness that admitted of no compromise. In short, she dressed the arm herself, bandaging it neatly and well; for the spinster knew what she could do and what she could not. The contusion upon his head was treated with equal adroitness and skill, and Somerton was greatly relieved by her ministrations. To Humphrey, who looked grimly on, she suggested that he'd "better go and make wounds on the pison Britishers, and leave the women to take care of such cases as the colonel's."

He retorted that his trade was not war, but in the name of God and Congress he occasionally struck a blow for freedom. To which

Miss Grindle made answer that she approved of his conduct, and hoped that he would pray and fight, and fight and pray; for a cause that was worth praying for was worth fighting for—which sentiments tended to assuage the offended chaplain.

CHAPTER XVI.

IN WHICH SOMERTON IS MYSTIFIED.

Somerton was glad to be left alone. The last twenty-four hours had been with him a period of peculiar trial and danger. He had been wounded, and in the hands of an unpitying enemy, deprived of those cares which his situation required, without medical aid, and stretched upon the cold earth in an apparently dying state. After a perilous and exciting escape, occupying several hours, he at length found himself beneath a friendly roof, upon a soft, inviting couch, with kind, attentive faces looking in upon him.

The volubility of the, to him, inexplicable Dame Grindle, had interested at first, as well as perplexed him; but, presently, weakness and sleep overpowered him. Dame Grindle's voice seemed to grow lower and lower, and recede in the distance; the hump of the swordmaker looked like a mountain in a mist, so far off that its summit could scarcely be discerned; the sergeant vanished with a proverb; the chaplain went down through the floor, or up through the roof, like a grim dragon, he could not tell which; but the form of Judith Redmond now came, now went, now returned and floated around him fantastically. The soldier slumbered. The old-fashioned dial marked three hours of time. The darkness of night had set in. A crash of musketry made Somerton start suddenly from his sleep. The sound called him to duty and to danger. For a moment, he believed himself at his quarters, in camp, beset by the enemy.

"Mount, boys! mount, and at them!" he muttered.

A soft hand was laid upon his brow, and his head pressed gently back to the pillow. The clouds of sleep were dispelled, and the Continental officer beheld a fair creature bending over him.

"Is it you? Is it you?" he murmured.

"Yes, it is I," said a soothing voice.

"Alas! fair girl, you will make more wounds than you will heal!" sighed Somerton.

"You are pleased to be as gallant in lady's bower as in the field," answered his charming nurse.

"I am a soldier, and have not learned the follies and flatteries of the courtier. My life is an earnest and precarious one, which the vicissitudes of my calling may at any time shorten. I have neither leisure nor disposition for vain compliments. I trust I shall be pardoned when I say, that our first meeting made an impression upon me that I cannot forget."

The young lady retreated a step, and looked at the colonel, inquiringly.

"What did you observe, sir?" she asked.

"That our short and singular interview produced feelings that to me are new and strange."

"Interview? I do not comprehend."

His lovely nurse contemplated him as if she feared he were losing his senses.

"Do not distrust my prudence, Miss Redmond. I will keep faithfully your secret; but it pains me to the heart that your visit had not a worthier object. I hope it was pity alone for a human being in distress, that conducted you to one condemned to death, and branded with deserved infamy."

Somerton's voice was low and earnest; he watched Miss Redmond's countenance with feverish anxiety.

"Be quiet, sir; your mind is distempered. Believe me, all that you are saying is but a dream. This, to my knowledge, is the first time you ever beheld me."

Miss Redmond had the manner of perfect truth. Somerton's countenance changed.

"I am sorry," he said, with a disappointed air, "that Miss Redmond should fear to trust me, and resorts to prevarication with one whose honor should not be doubted by her."

"I assure you, sir, that there is some mistake," she said.

"Mistake? Impossible! If I dreamed all this, I am dreaming still. The dream must have commenced at my quarters, at the moment when you came to request permission to see the spy, Deering. The illusion went on

when Deering denied that he *was* Deering. The burning cabin, the surprise, the man riding at my side, my capture, my wounds, my sufferings, my escape, were all of a piece, and arrant deceptions each! Pray, Miss Redmond, may I not be permitted to believe that you are real, and that this scene belongs to the waking part of my existence?"

The colonel raised himself on his elbow, and fixed his eyes piercingly upon the changing countenance of Miss Redmond.

"You—you confuse me beyond measure. I know not what to say; but rest assured," she added, with some hauteur, "that I never visited Colonel Somerton's quarters for any purpose whatever, or at any time in my life. This conceit comes of fever and pain."

"I am mad, perhaps!" answered Somerton, with an ironical smile.

"It is not singular that your mind should wander somewhat after the scenes through which you have recently passed," observed Miss Redmond, quietly.

"I am mocked!"

"Who mocks you?"

"Deering, the swordmaker, Dame Grindle, and you! Yes, you, you mock me!" exclaimed the colonel, impatiently.

"Nay, nay, good sir! Be patient, and all shall be as you say. If it be your pleasure, I will assent that I have been anywhere you wish. Be good, and take some of this liquid which my aunt has prepared for you; it will benefit you, I am sure."

"I am neither delirious nor wandering," replied Somerton, with emprosement, "and I will spare you the trouble, my dear young lady, of treating me as if I were such. Pardon me, let me understand you. You were not at my quarters?"

"I was not."

"Consequently, there was no interview between us?"

"There was not."

"You deny the whole transaction?"

"I deny what you affirm."

"Then, by Heaven, I *am* mad!" cried the officer, with vehemence.

There was another crash of musketry nearer than before. The house shook—the panes of glass rattling in the sashes. The well-known dissonance aroused the colonel's martial ardor.

"That volley was fired by my dragoons!" he said. "There is a fierce engagement not far from here. I must fly to my brave fellows. Lend me your arm. Give me my coat and sword!"

"My dear sir, you are wounded; you cannot mount horse or wield weapon," remonstrated the young woman.

"I can do both! This couch is a bed of thorns while I can hear my dragoons at work, and not be with them."

The officer sat upon the bed, his feet resting upon the floor. He stood up and found himself weaker than he had expected.

"I will compromise with you," said Miss Redmond. "Here is my father's dressing-gown; put it on, and I will assist you to a window, where you may see as much of the conflict as the darkness will permit."

"I believe I am in your power, Miss Redmond, and I surrendered at discretion; only substitute my coat for the gown—for I hate dressing-gowns. The sleeve is cut open, but you can pin it. You comply. Thank you, miss! How deftly you women handle us awkward fellows."

"You love your buttons, colonel, as well as a young girl her mirror. You are sure you are quite rational? You won't harm me?"

Miss Redmond, with some hesitation, assisted him to a window that looked toward the Santee.

"Harm her!" muttered the officer, as he walked by her side.

"Fear not," he said, raising his voice. "I am rational, and *truthful*, also," he added, in an aside tone.

The young woman heard him, and seemed to feel the implication deeply.

From the window, Somerton beheld an exciting spectacle. Some barns and several negro huts had been fired, and the flames lighted up with vividness the space between Redmond's residence and the river, which was now the scene of a fierce nocturnal conflict. Parties of horsemen were seen charging this way and that, sometimes in the full glare of the flaming buildings, at others in the faint and more distant gleam of the fiery illumina-

tion. There was a dropping fire of muskets and pistols, while sabres clashed, and the resounding notes of bugles rolled across the field. The combatants swayed and wavered to and fro. Now the tide of battle flowed his way, then ebbd back with a sudden impulse. Half-naked negroes were seen running to and fro in the foreground of the fight, and riderless horses dashed frantically from the melee.

Sergeant Giles, the chaplain, and a few armed blacks, with a half-dozen dragoons, constituted the sole guard and protection of Redmond and his household. Dame Grindle's voice was heard admonishing the slaves to stand their ground, and do their duty, on pain of after penalties.

Colonel Somerton looked out upon the chaos of battle a few moments in silence.

"What do you make of it?" asked Miss Redmond, timidly.

"Rainford is engaged with the headlong Tarleton. Those are his fellows in the bright coats. They are better fed and clothed than our lads, but not so hearty. I hate scarlet coats! There is a sort of vanity in them that suits John Bull, but which I can never forgive."

"The dragoons are giving ground; they are being overpowered by numbers," said Miss Redmond.

"Yes, they are yielding; but they dispute every inch as they go. There! that was Rainford's shot; he hurls his dragoons once more against the heavy ranks of the enemy. Now, there is hot work! They slowly retreat, pressed backward by the solid masses of Tarleton's legion. How vexatious to be here, when I should lead yonder! See! the tide of battle flows toward the wood. They have fired more huts. Who said Marion would come to our aid? Some one said so. I remember! 'twas the swordmaker. The old man knew not what he was saying. If help arrive not soon, all is lost! Some of the royal troops come this way. There go their pistols at the sergeant and his handful of men. Those negroes begin to fly at the first shot. Slaves are poor fighters. The sergeant and his men draw their heavy sabres. Note the chaplain! He chafes like a war-horse under the curb bit. Giles is as good at the sword-exercise as at proverbs. He rises in his stirrups and dashes at the red-coated rascals with a cheer. Gallantly done, sergeant, gallantly done! My sword, Miss Redmond—my sword!"

"The stables are on fire!—the stables are on fire!" exclaimed Miss Redmond.

The smoke of battle and of the burning buildings hung like a black canopy over the plantation, as if to shut the terrible scene from the eye of Heaven. The glare and confusion and clangor, the tramping of horses, the shouts, groans, and imprecations of men, all conspired to render the spectacle fearful.

Somerton was much excited; he beat upon his breast, crying:

"Oh, for one hour of Marion! The thunder of his brigade would be music! This sight makes me dizzy. Where are you, Miss Redmond? Give me your hand. The lights are gone out."

The colonel put his hands to his head, and his fair companion, seeing his condition, hastened to place a chair for him, into which he sank, quite senseless.

CHAPTER XVII.

LOVE AND FIRE.

The colonel revived presently, and asked his trembling companion:

"What do they now?"

"The sergeant is driven away, and our friends are cut off from the house. A guard is placed over Aunt Grindle and my sister, and my father is fighting side by side with Giles. But they cannot break through the thronging ranks of our enemies. Oh, sir! what will become of us?"

Miss Redmond wrung her hands with anguish, and turned anxiously to Somerton. Her dark hair hung disheveled around her pale face; she was the picture of beautiful helplessness.

The wounded officer tried to rally his strength to save her and himself.

"Can we not fly? Can we not escape from the rear of the house?" he asked, quickly.

"How fiercely the battle rages!" cried the

young girl. "The redcoats have not even found time to plunder the premises."

"Hark!" said Somerton. "I hear the crackling of flames!"

"It comes from the burning stables," she replied.

"It is the house!—it is the house!" exclaimed Somerton.

At that moment, a musket-ball shattered a pane of glass, and passed through a scarf that the young woman had thrown over her shoulders. Despite his wounds, Somerton sprang up and drew her from the window.

"It were sad," he said, "if blood like thine be shed in this conflict. Come! let us go. How silent the house is, save that ominous roar. I have not heard a footstep within since we entered this apartment."

"It is a dreadful night! Yes, we will go. How close the air is!"

She opened a door, and they passed into a hall; it was full of smoke; they were forced back into the room they had left.

"The window!—the window! Let us escape by the window!" said Somerton, to whom excitement had given momentary strength. Miss Redmond approached it and drew back with a shriek. Black Jaffer stood upon the outside, with a long knife in his hand, and a frightful grin upon his apish face. An apparition more grim and threatening cannot be imagined. Even Somerton recoiled. His breast was swathed with a coarse strip of cloth, which was stained with purple spots. Somerton remembered, with a shiver, his adventures with the brutal creature the previous morning. He weaved his weapon, crying: "Burn! burn! burn!"

A strong light from the blazing stables bathed the face and form of the black giant, rendering him the most fearful spectacle of the night—revealing, as it did, in his heaving chest and working features, the demoniac passions that possessed him.

"Jaffer! Jaffer! let us pass!" implored the girl, holding up her hands to the black.

"Burn! burn! fire in dis corner—fire in dat; fire 'bove—fire b'low; fire on roof—fire in de cellar! Burn! burn!"

He laughed like a devil.

"Doors fast—rooms full o' smoke—choke, smother, die! Jaffer will have revenge!"

"Miscreant!" cried Somerton. "Begone, or I'll throttle you!"

Jaffer chuckled, and waved his weapon triumphantly in the red glare. There was no answer to such pantomime; it was dire and final.

"My God!" groaned Somerton, "I never knew what helplessness was before. Miss Redmond, I would die for you; but, alas! I cannot save you. Had it not been for me, you might have escaped. Lovely girl, I have involved you in my own fate."

"Let us not yet despair; there may be other ways of escape. If you are strong enough, follow me," she answered, with heroic courage.

"Strong!" repeated the colonel. "I have the strength of a madman; and but for this mutilated arm, I would rend yonder black Satan limb from limb!"

Together they sprang from the room. The last object they saw, as they left it, was the face of Jaffer against the window. The words "Burn! burn!" followed them like the hissings of a serpent. They fought their way through the smoke of the hall; there was no egress—the doors were locked, as the negro had said. There was a flight of steps leading to the upper part of the house.

"Let us up!" said the colonel. "Surely there must be a window above from which we may cast ourselves. Any death is better than this."

Miss Redmond was nearly overcome by the suffocating fumes that every instant rushed hot and choking into her lungs. Somerton threw his left arm around her, and assisted her to ascend the stairs. Both were obliged to pause at the top.

"Which way?—which way?" asked Miss Redmond, faintly.

"Any way with thee, Judith!—any way with thee!"

"Judith?" she repeated; "Judith? Ah! he—he—"

Whatever she would have said was not uttered; she fainted, and rested a dead weight on the arm of Somerton. He carried her toward a window, but the heat cracked the glass, and the flames darted through it be-

fore he reached it. He retreated. The roof blazed and trembled over his head. Looking up, he could see the glowing rafters and the dry tiles burning like tinder. The stairs were by this time on fire. Jaffer had done his work thoroughly. Somerton feared to descend them lest the light drapery of Miss Redmond should be seized upon by the flames, and the catastrophe hastened. He drew his helpless burden to a window at the end of a corridor. To his consternation, it was latticed with stout oaken bars; it had been thus secured to repel enemies. He tried to force off one of the bars, but it obstinately defied his strength. He plunged his hand through the lattice and broke a pane of glass. Fresh air rushed in and revived the young woman.

"We shall not part company," murmured Somerton. "I shall perish with the woman I love."

The recollection of her denial of a palpable fact, flashed like lightning through his brain. The blinding, stifling smoke; the blazing roof; the darting flames, could not make him forget the falsehood.

"Why should this fair temple be sullied with a lie?" were words that involuntarily escaped his lips.

"I am true! I am true!" she said, in a faint and scarcely articulate voice.

"Name it not in this fearful hour. We are doomed! It is written that we shall die together; the solemn decretal is laid away with the records in the archives of fate. It does not thrill me with anguish and despair, for I shall go hence with an angel, who will lead me to the door of Paradise."

"Forbear! forbear!" implored the young girl, in a pity-moving voice. "There is a mistake—a fatal, fatal mistake! I am not—I am not—"

The roof creaked and trembled; the wind, rushing through the wide rents the fire had made, drove shafts of flame against Somerton and the girl. He screened her with his person, and his garments withered in the intense heat. He scarcely felt pain; the inspiration of love raised him above suffering.

"My life," he said, "is not in myself; it is in thee. Let the flames rage; I feel them not; I feel only thee. Scorch so much as thy smallest finger, and my flesh shall suffer."

"We are dying!" she murmured. "You must not die in an error. I am—"

"Error?" interrupted Somerton. "I love thee! How can there be an error? It is a sudden passion, but deep, deep, and changeless!"

She attempted to raise herself to reply, but the heat and smoke conquered her will, and put out the sweet candle of her consciousness. Whatever the thought that agitated her, it was likely to perish unexpressed.

Somerton was endowed with a strange tenacity of life. His wounds no longer troubled him. The soul within was stronger than flesh and fire. He breathed in the smoke where another would have died or sunk insensible, to be caught up by the flames and devoured. He tore off his coat and wrapped it about the person of Miss Redmond. He beat back the fire with his hands. He fought the flaming dragon alone, and for her. Every moment he expected the crash of the quivering roof. He placed his mouth to the lattice and shouted. An iron hand grasped his throat; he writhed, struggled, and with the last instinct of protection for his beloved, threw himself upon her person. He floated upon a sea of fire, and was tossed to and fro on the hot billows.

There were hurried steps; the form of Deering, the spy, seemed to plunge into the fiery element and bear him away. Yes, it was Deering! That thought was strongly defined. The man was invulnerable; he parted the blazing sea with his arms as he had parted the waters of the Santee. He tried to articulate the name of his companion, and to break from his arms. Then came darkness—then black phantasies—then rest—then a gasping, fluttering, fluctuating sense of existence. The first object he saw was the swordmaker.

"Where is she?" he cried.

"Who?" demanded the swordmaker, hoarsely.

"Miss Redmond! Judith—Judith!" answered Somerton, hurriedly.

"Was she in the building?" asked Hirl, in a gasping voice.

"Yes, indeed!—yes. This is dreadful!"

The colonel arose to his feet.

"Where are you going?" asked Hirl, detaining him by the arm.

"To perish with her!" he replied, with determination.

"Have I lived and hoped for this?" exclaimed the swordmaker. "The roof has fallen. Too late—too late to save her!"

"Then I will cast myself into the burning pile. I swear to you that I will not survive her!"

"O misery! O torture!" muttered the old man, bending lower and lower beneath the weight on his back and the heaviness of his soul. "Perhaps," he stammered, "you—you loved her?"

"I did, old man! Where is he who saved me? Bring the villain hither. The wretch! to take me and leave her!"

"Were you together?" asked Hirl.

"Together, old man! What power on earth could part me from her in such a moment? I shielded her from the flames; I covered her with my garments and my person; I battled the fire with my naked hands. Speak, dotard, speak! Who saved me? I will kill him for his kindness!"

The swordmaker staggered to a tree, and supporting himself by the trunk, seemed to weep. He raised his head presently, and answered:

"A strange man dashed through the smoke and flame, and saved your life at the risk of his own. He came forth scathed and blistered by the fire!"

"His name—his name?"

"I noticed not his face," said Hirl.

"A singular conceit crossed my brain; I thought it was Deering, the spy."

"Why should he wish to save an enemy?" queried the hunchback.

"That is what perplexes me. Alas, fair Judith! Old man, you know not how this mournful calamity affects me."

"Peace!" cried Hirl. "Think yours will be the only heart wrung by this grief? There may be others who love her better."

"No, no! I loved her at our first meeting."

"At your first meeting!" muttered the swordmaker.

"When she came to gain admission to the spy."

"Did you tell your love?"

The old man did not speak as usual. His voice was less shrill, less in control.

"It concerns you not, good man. I have uttered many wild things since the sun went down. I scarcely know what I have said."

"And she?"

"She? She is a saint!"

"True, true! But one saved, and that not Judith. But stay! stay! there may be hope yet."

With these words the swordmaker darted away toward that part of the field where the conflict could still be heard, though gradually receding, leaving Somerton alone.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WHICH SOLVES A CERTAIN MYSTERY.

Somerton was still in an exposed position. Occasionally a horseman crossed the space between him and the burning mansion, whose red coat sufficiently indicated to which party he belonged. However deep the colonel's sorrow, it did not overcome his instinctive dread of captivity, or extinguish his inherent love of liberty. He moved into the bushes behind him, as much to avoid the sight of the tottering walls of Redmond's house, as the too near approach of an enemy. He saw, a few yards distant, a negro hut, which, sheltered by trees, had escaped the general destruction. He hastened toward it, for he longed to be alone, where he could abandon himself for a time to those emotions that asked indulgence. The door was open; he went in, and beheld a spectacle that more than surprised him—that for a moment caught away his breath and volition. The fair girl who had shared his danger—the terrible peril of that night—was reclining upon a rude seat, supported by Goody Grindle.

Somerton clung, gasping, to the log-wall, by no means certain that he was not the subject of a tantalizing dream.

"O Miss Redmond!" he exclaimed, when he could master his voice. "Is this indeed real? It is too, too much joy!"

He staggered forward and took her hand.

"Yes, it is I. I am saved! But you—I have suffered for you, thinking you lost. My friend, through what a scene we have passed!" she answered, in tones so hurried and tremulous as to be scarcely intelligible.

"I had sworn not to outlive you; I came here to weep for you, and to die! But God gives me the cup of joy, and His hand draws me back from the gulf of Despair. O Judith! Judith!"

"That name again!" murmured Miss Redmond.

"Pardon, pardon the familiarity! My gladness is such that I cannot restrain myself to the unmeaning conventionalities of life," replied Somerton, sinking at her feet through weakness and emotion.

"He faints!—how fearfully he is burned! And for me—for me, whom he mistakes—for me, who am unworthy."

The swordmaker stood at the door, but Somerton did not see him.

"Hoity toity!—stuff and nonsense! There's other things to be thought of. The Britishers are up and doin', and bagonets and butchery pervails through the land. Barns are afire, housen are burnin', women and children are flyin' and cryin', the Continenters are in full run, and Liberty trembles in the balance! There's good lads and true dying on the field, with neither mother, wife, nor sweetheart to close their eyes. Lord! Lord! what a world it is! The wheels o' time are rollin' and rollin' us, and we shall soon be clods o' the valley."

"Your garments are charred, your hands blistered, your arms blackened and wounded in your unequal conflict with the fire!" cried the young woman. "O good aunt," she added, "here is work for you. Hasten to assist him."

"Dear goodness! how hard you look at each other! I do believe there's been shilly-shallyin' and love-makin' atween you two—even when the wheels o' time were revolvin' you away, as it were, by fire. What puts such notions into young folks' heads, and makes 'em forgit that they're born to die, that life's on-sartin and death sartin, and that the sublunarys and temporals are transitory and fadin', and don't last long, spin 'em out as you will? Lawful goodness! what a snarl we're in! Here we be mixed up with guns, pistols, swords, and bagonets, hosses and riders chargin', and fightin', and cuttin', and worryin', carnage and bloodshed, burnin' huts, housen, and barns, destruction o' property, love, and liberty."

"Jes so, Goody Grindle—jes so," said the swordmaker, from whose features all traces of emotion had vanished. "As I've said afore, if I's on'y younger, and had less responsibility on my shoulders—"

"Call things by their right names, Mr. What's-your-name; for there a'n't an atom o' sense in calling a hump a responsibility," interrupted Goody Grindle, sharply.

"Don't make sport of my infirmity," piped Hirl. "Natur' put it there, and I've got to bear it."

"If Natur' put it there, I must say, that she was woundedly put to it for something to do. If the jade had played sich a trick on me, I'd jist let Somerton's dragoons hack at it awhile with their sabres. But we a'n't all alike. Some has the gift o' beauty, and some are flung together most any way, as if only for temporary use. Dear me! I can hear the firin' yet. How do you feel now, child? What's goin' to become of us, the Lord only knows! Everything falls on me, and allers did. There's nobody to do nor say anythin' but my blessed self. Well, colonel, you are burned, I do declare. Why, for goodness, didn't you go out when you found the house was afire? Jaffer there? A runaway! He hasn't forgot that cuttin'-up yet; and it'll be a long while afore he does. He's a vessel o' wrath; and I don't care how soon he finds himself among the clods. I vow I don't know what I shall do for 'intment! Not a salve nor a doctor-stuff of any kind can I lay hands on."

"Trouble not yourself, good Miss Grindle," said Somerton. "Give me but some coarse garment to put on, and I shall do well enough."

Dame Grindle, in a trice, and without any affectation of delicacy, slipped off a flannel petticoat; and, before the colonel had divined her purpose, it was thrown over his head, and she was tying the stout strings close up under his arms. The effect of this novel costume

was irresistibly ludicrous. Miss Redmond and the swordmaker began to laugh; and Somerton, after surveying himself with a doubtful expression, was forced to join in their merriment.

"Really, Miss Grindle," said that officer, deprecatingly, "I much doubt whether this becomes me."

"Lord! who cares, colonel? Niece, stand up and let me have that coat under you. It's his, and I'll die if 'tisn't! He was fool enough to pull it off and put it round ye, wasn't he, and let his own flesh and blood burn? Well, that's jest like a man! I wonder the wheels o' time don't roll 'em all away, they've got so little judgment. What a rag it is! This 'counts, child, for you, comin' out with a whole skin. It saved that doll-face and neck, and them baby white hands. But I'll pin it on right over the petticoat: it'll show what his rank is—which is somethin'—if he should be taken prisoner."

"It's 'mazin' cur'ous," said Hirl, "it's 'mazin' cur'ous, Goody Grindle, that a handy body like you never got married. Seems to me you could fell afoul of somebody that would had ye."

"Marry come up! that I could; and they hadn't Christmas puddin's on their backs, neither."

"The poor man can't help it, aunt," suggested Miss Redmond.

"I didn't say he could, chit! But he could have it amputated. I'd have my revenge on't, I'll warrant, if I had it. I'd set the surgeons at it, slap dab."

"It involves the spinal column, aunt," said Miss Redmond.

"Who keers for the spiral column! I don't. It's Tarleton's columns that I'm afeard of. Poor Judith! I'm worried e'en most to death about her."

"Judith?" repeated Somerton, inapprehensively.

"Goodness, Miriam! here's more'n forty holes in the back of your gown. Stand up, and let me pull it into shape. Odds my life! how cur'ous! Here's a little strip round the waist as fresh as when it come out the drawer!"

Miss Redmond blushed; Somerton's arm had produced that phenomenon.

"Miriam!" echoed the colonel; "Miriam!"

"What ails the man that he keeps repeatin' things like a parrot? Lord, niece! why do you tremble so?"

"I tried to tell you," stammered Miss Redmond, greatly agitated—"I attempted to inform you that I was not Judith, but Miriam."

"Not Judith, but Miriam!" echoed Somerton, dubiously. Then a joyful light broke over his countenance.

"Forgive me! oh, forgive me! Before Heaven, I meant not to deceive!" protested Miriam, hiding her face.

"The deception," answered Somerton, "was my own. Forgive you? Angels do not sin."

"There isn't an angel in the thirteen colonies!" affirmed Goody Grindle.

"I must differ with you, madam," replied Somerton.

"How ludicrous to stan' talkin of angels in a woman's flannel petticoat! Neither of my nieces are angels, and they won't be, in a hurry—though I've seen worse-lookin' gals. She'd got her wings scorched to-night if she had been, Miriam would. They do look monstrously 'like; and if I's a man, I'd lief make love to one of 'em as 'tother. Much as I can do to tell 'em apart. It's the fortunest thing in the world that this one squints a little. I should be bothered to death to 'stinguish 'em if she didn't."

"Squint, aunt!"

Miriam looked at Goody Grindle with something like consternation.

"I haven't observed anything of the kind," remarked Somerton.

"Noticed it the first time I seen her. The gal's eyes are a good 'eal 'out o' plumb some times," corroborated Hirl.

"Go 'long, you old camel!" retorted Dame Grindle. "Child! child! what makes you tremble? What is the matter? Colonel Somerton, what have you done to my niece?"

"I have done what mortal man may be pardoned for doing," he answered, with a warmth and earnestness that appeared quite uncalled for to the practical aunt.

"I fear," said Miriam, "that I have forfeited your esteem." She looked timidly into his face.

"Pardon me, dame," replied Somerton; and, stooping, whispered in Miss Redmond's ear:

"I swear to you it is the happiest mistake of my life! Be assured—be calm. Judith is, perhaps, beyond my reach; but you, *you* I may hope for. God has not left me to despair."

"There!" said Betsey Grindle, dryly, "I can understand the phenomenon of the gown not bein' burnt around the waist!"

CHAPTER XIX.

DER HADLEY'S CABIN.

We return to Judith, whose sudden and continued absence had created the greatest alarm and anxiety among her friends, who hailed her return with joy—after she had been escorted by the swordmaker within a short distance of the house.

In answer to the hurried questionings of her father and aunt, she said that she had been to Somerton's camp, to carry a few articles of clothing which Miss Grindle had prepared for the use of the soldiers; and her absence would scarcely have been remarked had she not unfortunately become lost in the Pine Forest, where she passed a night of perplexity and terror, from which she had been relieved by the friendly interposition of Hirl, the Hunchback. She did not of course refer to Deering; and therefore, the real design of her visit remained a secret, as well as the disguise she had assumed. The times were so fraught with adventure, so crowded with stirring events, that the members of her household found little time to rebuke her rashness, or talk of the risk she had incurred. In those days, stagnation was unknown, and incident followed incident in rapid succession; and while Judith was yet engaged in relating such portions of her mishap as she thought prudent, it was announced by the frightened slaves that there was trouble in the cypresses. This, startling as it was, proved a present relief to Judith; for each hurried, as by one impulse, to positions from which they could best observe the conflict. Then came Somerton to make a new diversion, and put the philanthropic fingers of Aunt Grindle to active service. That officer, having sunk into a slumber, as duly mentioned in the order in which these events occurred, Judith availed herself of the temporary lull of indoor excitement, to seek that rest which her weary and worn condition rendered imperative, while her sister, Miriam, was left to watch at the bedside of Somerton.

The din of battle aroused Judith, banished the idea of further repose, and caused her to hurry with the other members of the family to learn the reason of this new and more thrilling interruption. Soon the huts and barns began to burn; and she beheld the same startling spectacle of warring horsemen and flashing steel that Somerton and his fair guardian witnessed from the window. Judith and Goody Grindle were standing upon the lawn at the left wing of the mansion, when the attack was made upon Giles and his handful of dragoons. She was clinging to that decisive lady, watching with filial interest the emotions of her father, who, mounted upon a fine horse, had joined the sergeant, with such of his slaves as he believed would be of use, when she was unexpectedly seized by rough hands, and with Dame Grindle and Meg, hurried to a distance from the house. When the dragoons began to fall back upon the wood, and the scale of battle seemed no longer doubtful, Dame Grindle was released, with many jests and much merriment at her expense; for she had acquired such a habit of talking, that nothing under heaven but a complete extinction of her being could stop her, when fully launched upon the sounding sea of loquacity. Judith and Meg remained with their captors; and presently the former saw, with inexpressible sorrow, the flames curling from the roof of the paternal mansion. She thought of her sister and Somerton, and begged the ruffians around her to go to their rescue, who heard her appeals with the utmost insensibility. While she was making these useless entreaties, a man in the uniform of a British officer approached. It was Christian Hadley, that tory-leader, whose name was at that time held in universal dread and execration by the friends of freedom.

Judith knew him; they had met before, and parted with anger on his side, disgust and abhorrence on hers. He had paid suit to her in

his rough fashion, before he had become so stained with crime and blackened with villainy. More than once in the past had he placed himself in her path, and added terror to repugnance. Of late, they had not met, for he had been busy in making himself infamous to all posterity; while she had seldom ventured from the paternal roof. As the war rolled nearer, and finally encircled them, her fears of Christian Hadley had grown stronger, and secretly she had long expected a visit from him at the head of his marauders. The moment of vengeance and triumph had arrived. The grim partisan stood before her, not to sue but to command.

Judith saw exultation in his eyes, and knew too much of his character to attempt to move him. She fixed her regards upon the burning house, and affected not to notice him, although she was trembling at his presence.

"Well, Miss Judith, what do you think of this?" he asked, with a sneer. She gave him a haughty, indignant glance—a mute answer that annoyed him more than words.

"You see the fate of rebellion and rebels," he added. "I told you long ago that it would come to this, but you spurned the prophecy. If you'd taken my advice, you wouldn't behold to-night your home in flames, and your household scattered."

"Infamous!" murmured Judith.

"Infamous! 'tis mighty well, Miss Redmond! Your pride and scorn become you; but both will be humbled."

"Whatever rigor or cruelty you may offer, I beg of you not to speak, but to spare me the sound of a voice that is hateful to me. To see you and to hear you, are two misfortunes from which I pray Heaven to deliver me."

"I am a British officer, Judith Redmond, and have the king's commission in my pocket," returned Hadley, pompously.

"Say, rather, that you are a traitor, a renegade, a marauder, a swamp-robber—anything but a true and honest man!" cried Judith, with a warmth of indignation that proved how deeply she felt the truthfulness of what she uttered.

"Traitor, renegade, marauder, robber!" repeated Hadley, with a frowning brow.

"The terms are too mild; they fall infinitely below my meaning," added Judith.

"If I am such a monster, you have reason to expect but little mercy from me," said Hadley, with a menacing look.

"I anticipate from you all that is unmanly, dishonorable, and evil, if God does not deliver me from your hands."

"You shall not be disappointed in your anticipations. I swear it!" replied the captain, his face reddening with anger.

"I have not tried to excite your compassion, for I know how vain and hopeless would be the attempt. I put my trust in One stronger than thou. To Him will I make my prayer and not to thee," answered Judith, impressively.

"I will not keep you long in suspense. Men, put her upon a horse. Two of you mount and attend me."

Miss Redmond, seeing the futility of resistance, allowed herself to be placed passively upon horseback. She was then escorted from the scene of the late events by the captain and two of his fellows—a proceeding much against her wishes. Meg was taken up behind one of the men. Fear had thus far kept her silent; but now, finding her tongue, she began to bewail her fate bitterly.

"We's jes' the same as dead, missus; cl'ar done killed and murdered by dese yer no 'count tories!" she said, turning a piteous face upon her mistress, who made a feeble attempt to console her.

"No use to talk dat ar' way, Miss Judith, for dar ain't no sense in it. Dem yer wheels o' time dat Miss Bessy talk 'bout so much, is jes' turnin' round mighty fast. It wouldn't s'prise me an artom, if we's clods of de valley afore de risin' of de blessed sun. Jest tink o' dat! An' we's so young, too, and might live so many years, if they'd only let us be!"

The tory behind whom she was seated, perceiving her state of mind, took pleasure in increasing her terrors during the remainder of the nocturnal ride, by various appalling threats and ingenious artifices. This journey lasted about an hour, and wound eccentrically through the Pine Woods by a narrow path, at the expiration of which time they arrived at a log-cabin, through the crevices of which

the glimmer of a fire could be seen. Hadley threw himself from his horse, and knocked loudly with the hilt of his sword; which summons was instantly answered by a woman's voice within.

"Who are ye, and what do ye want? This is a fine hour to come disturbin' a lone woman, who is neutral to both parties and hasn't nobody to protect her, them as should be her defenders bein' out o' the country, and gone the Lord only knows where, for I don't, though it's caused me oceans o' trouble and worryment."

How much longer the woman would have gone on, is problematical; for both lungs and tongue seemed in excellent order for running a long time. Hadley interrupted her with:

"Come, come, old lady! Hold up and belay; you're wasting a good deal o' breath, for 'tis I that knock."

"Is it my son Christian?" she demanded; and instantly there followed a rattling of bolts and bars, and the door was opened.

Judith had felt somewhat encouraged when she heard a female voice; but when its possessor stood before her, her hope in one of her own sex received a shock. Mrs. Hadley was not a model of feminine beauty, being of a large and masculine frame, with an abundance of bone and muscle, prominent cheeks, a large nose, gray eyes, eyebrows, and hair, and a mouth of unusual calibre, rendered less attractive by the loss of most of her teeth. The united expression of the various features of her face was coarse, shrewish, and determined.

Her garments were unique and striking in their combination. Over a red-flannel petticoat and the remnant of a waist, she wore a man's coat buttoned close to the throat, which gave her a decidedly stiff and military air. This incongruous article of dress was black, contrasting pretty strongly with the red petticoat below, and the gray, stumpy hair above. She held in her right hand a stout oaken stick, for defence or aggression.

"Well, son Christian, what do you want, and what do you bring with you?" she asked.

"What have I brought, mother Hadley? My sweetheart, old woman!" said the captain, with filial familiarity.

"Which one is it?" quoth Mrs. Hadley, elevating her eyebrows, and squinting first at Judith than at Meg. "Is it the yaller or the white?"

"This hop-o'-my-thumb little woman is the one; but I warn you that you won't find her the most tractable body in the world. She's handsome and proud, and hates me, I flatter myself, as cordially as a young lady ever hated her future husband," replied the captain, making a bearish attempt at playfulness.

"Hoity-toity!" exclaimed Mother Hadley, placing her arms akimbo, and looking sharply at her prospective daughter-in-law. "Hate my son Christian? How dare a gal hate my son Christian? How smart he looks in his new regimentals! A reg'lar officer, too, in the British Army. Tote her in!"

Judith, who had dismounted, was now conducted into the cabin, trembling with fear.

"You are a woman," she said, addressing Mrs. Hadley, "and I throw myself upon your protection. Shield me from these wretches, and Heaven will reward you for your kindness."

"Wretches? That's what I call a sharp beginning, I vow! Wretches, indeed! Deborah Hadley don't have no wretches about her premises. Lord, Chris! what did you bring sich a baggage as this here for? I'll die if 'tisn't one o' Squire Redmond's darters; and the Redmonds are the rankest rebels in the country. Now, no son o' mine shall marry a rebel!"

"It's no use talkin', mother; I took a shine to her long ago, and my mind hasn't been settled and happy since. I know that she scorns me, but I can't help it; the more she disdains me, the more I'm fascinated. If I hate her when my temper is up, I love her again when it goes down," answered Hadley, moodily.

"What a simpleton!" muttered Mother Deb. "And he stands six feet two inches in his regimentals; and a proper lad to look at—with his red coat, and sword, and gold shoulder-knots! What gal, that isn't a rebel, could say 'No' to my son, Christian, with his sword, and red coat, and gold shoulder-knots, and his commission in his pocket?"

While making these remarks, Mother Deb was surveying Judith in a very critical and

determined manner, and with a face sharper in its expression than the captain's sword.

"I beg of you to teach your son—if your son he really be—that maidens do not marry on compulsion, and cannot be forced to accept husbands obnoxious in every respect—much less one whose hands are stained with blood, who wars upon the country that gave him birth, and whose crimes are odious to mankind."

Mother Deb was extremely shocked and exasperated at this rebellious disposition, and it was some moments before she could give utterance to her feelings.

"This before my face!" she screamed. "This to my son Christian, with his red coat and his long sword, his gold shoulder-knots and brave cap! Well, it does seem as if them that turn their back agin the king was give over to all manner o' wickedness. Trust her to me. I'll take the starch out of her."

In the abundance of her wrath, Mrs. Hadley caught Judith by the arm and shook her. This indignity had the effect to arouse Meg from her imbecile stupor of fear.

"Come! none o' dat yer!" she cried, bristling up to the virago. "Don't spects to make her lub dat no 'count cretur in dat way, does ye? Better mind what ye 'bout; for Mas'r Redmon' 'll hear o' your doin's, and cut ye up right smart."

Mrs. Hadley made a pass at Meg with her stick, which she fortunately dodged; we say fortunately, because, had it taken effect, it would have produced, no doubt, a serious fracture of the skull.

Judith, never having found herself in a like situation, was at a loss what to say or do. The events of the last twenty-four hours had followed each other so rapidly, that she was quite bewildered and pushed from her mental equilibrium. She was the subject of much dread and terror, but could not clearly realize the new cordon of circumstances that had suddenly closed around her. She was aware that she was in the power of a villain, whose desires were too well seconded by a masculine and unscrupulous woman. A part of the time her mind was in such a state of chaos, that she could scarcely decide whether she were sleeping or waking—'twas all so strange, so sudden, so fraught with dreadful consequences. Two things she desired most sincerely: to be relieved of the presence of Hadley, and to rest, to give her mind time to regain its tone.

CHAPTER XX.

DAME HADLEY AND BLACK JAFFER.

Captain Christian Hadley, of the Royal Americans (for by this high-sounding title he affected to call his band of marauders), paced up and down the cabin some moments, with steps too unsteady to be strictly military, pondering the subject of his misplaced love, and studying new tactics to make it successful. That his feelings were interested in Judith, was obvious. That he loved her truly, was another thing that by no means followed. He had, to use his own phraseology, "set his mind on her," and desired her more than any other object. Resistance and disdain had increased his passion, adding to it an angry and resentful vehemence strangely and paradoxically spiced with a wish to humble and conquer her. If we can imagine a man both loving and hating, at the same time, the tory partisan would approach nearest to that character.

His masculine mother watched him with the eagerness of a tiger anxious for the safety of her whelp. She was watching the symptoms of his disease, in order to find the best method of cure.

"I knew her when she was a little girl," said Christian, in the tone of one commencing a touching Jeremiad. "She was the best-lookin' in the whole country, and her manners were different from others of her age. I fixed my mind on her then, and it hasn't changed since."

He paused before Judith, with an expression dark and sinister. He frowned on her, as one might frown on an enemy.

"I remember, girl," he said, "your scorn of me."

"My son Christian," interposed Mrs. Hadley, "in his royal r-d, and his commission in his pocket, should bear no gal's scorn."

"Mother," answered Christian, sternly, "you don't know what it is to be bewitched by a woman—to hate and to love her at the same time."

"Fudge and fustian!" retorted the practical Mrs. Hadley. "You're gal-struck, that's sartin. When love goes into a lad's head, sense goes out. How different I'd act if I's a man! If a young woman didn't take a notion to me, I'd jest hold up my head and say I wasn't in airnest, and hope she wouldn't be sich a fool as to think I was. That's the way to sarve 'em! But here you are, whinin' like a dog with his ears fresh cropped, and all for the love of Squire Redmond's darter."

"I thank you! Speak for me—speak for me, good woman," said Judith.

"I am not the good woman! The good woman lives opposite!" retorted Mother Deb, bridling. "Look at me, you proud minx!"

Judith mechanically obeyed, while the virago drew herself up with the dignity of a military hero.

"A'n't I a proper-made woman, with a proper face and a proper form, and common-sense to match? What do you want of a better mother-in-law than I am? You might s'arch the whole thirteen Colonies, and not find another sich."

"De good Lor' knows it!" muttered Meg, keeping her eyes watchfully on the stick.

"These walls are mine, and this ruff over your head, and the little clearin' outside, and all that pertains to the premises; and here you shall stay as long as my son Christian wants ye to stay, and is so miser'ble about ye. A soger and a great man is Christian; and he wears the royal red, and he fights the battles of the king with the Royal Americans. Think of the honor, gal! Think what it is to be the wife of an officer, with knots on his shoulders and a long sword by his side, with a troop of jolly boys to march arter him, to tramp hither and thither, to ride to and fro, and do his biddin', though the wind blow high, though the wind blow low."

Judith could not refrain from gazing at this singular woman, with newly-awakened curiosity, her incongruous garb, her air, her attitude, and her original manner of speaking, all struck her as being unique and wonderful. She began to study how she should manage such a creature in a way to subserve her own safety, but with very unsatisfactory results. The woman was an anomaly. She was famous among the Tories of that section, to whom her cabin was at all times open for shelter, and who had dubbed her "Captain Deb."

"Hoorah for Cap'n Deb!" cried one of the horsemen, who had escorted Judith.

"Them is sentiments!" affirmed his comrade, with strong admiration.

Judith resolved to be artful.

"We must become acquainted," she answered, with more amenity. "What you say ought to be reflected upon. You are a woman of too much sense to wish me to do anything in a hurry. This is a subject to be considered between us, alone. I should not be worthy to fill the place you propose, if I acted with undue haste. I am fatigued, dispirited, and suffering from the effects of excitement. Let me retire, and seek that repose which my condition so much requires."

"Squire Redmond's darter, you're a hypocrite! I can see hyp'crisy in your eyes. You may deceive common people; but you can't 'possum Cap'n Deb, with her black-frock buttoned up afore, and the red-petticoat hangin' down aneathe. I've got one thing, mistress, and you'll find it out; and that's cuteness."

Mrs. Hadley snapped her thumb and finger, and looked at Judith as playfully as a cat at a mouse.

"Mother," said Christian, morosely, "I've made up my mind what to do; both love and revenge urge me to it. I'd do different if I could, but can't. A cursed spell is on me—a power I cannot break urges me onward. I know not whether 'tis passion, or pride, or the devil, and, perhaps, it don't matter."

The captain stopped abruptly, and demanded a glass of rum and water, which Mother Hadley hastened to give him. He drank a frightful quantity, casting the vessel upon the floor when he had drained it.

"There! that puts life into me. There's nothing like liquor to give a man pluck when there's mischief to be done. I always drink when I go to fight the rebels, or to rob their stables, burn their houses, or to use rope and steel. I hate the Redmonds, father and aunt, kith and kin, all but Judith; and sometimes I hate her. The e have been high times to-night, mother. Tarleton has cut up Comer-ton's dragoons; Redmond's plantation is in

a blaze; Somerton is dead, and Rainford has retreated to the Pine Woods; to-morrow he will be hunted down. Then comes Marion's turn, and the Carolinas will be swept clear of rebellion. You may hang the royal banner on your cabin, and no hand will dare remove it. All things shall be our own way. We, who are branded murderers and renegades, will become the first in the land. We shall be no longer infamous, but be exalted to the places of rulers, magistrates, and military heroes."

Hadley now walked rapidly, much excited by the picture he had drawn.

"My son Christian," murmured Mrs. Hadley, "with his royal red, his long sword, his gold shoulder-knots, and his commission in his pocket! Lord! what a proper lad."

"Keep her, mother, till I come back. If you let her go, you'll never see me again, with my sword, and coat, and shoulder-knots. Bring her round, if you can."

"I'll bring her round whether she will or no, for the sake of my son, Christian!" protested Mother Deb. "It's my opinion that if she's bewitched ye, and you can't get over it, that you'd better bring a parson and have the knot tied, will she, nill she. The country and all it holds is ours. The rebels is flyin', and the royal standards push on and on, and who is king but Georgie? Time will reconcile her. I know what gals is; was a gal myself once; but that was afore I married your father. They take on at fust at a disapp'intment, like a child that's lost a sugar-plum; but presently they come out bright as a hummin'-bird. You want her; and what my son Christian wants he must have."

"I thank you! I thank you!" Now I know that you love me!" cried Christian, eagerly. "You have anticipated my purpose: it is for a pratin' parson that I am goin'. I despise the whole brotherhood; but I'll have one because it's the custom. But what odds—what odds? Have I not slain men in battle, and in midnight forays? Taking a wife by force is not murder. You want these lads, mother?"

He pointed to his companions.

"Want 'em? Cap'n Deb want two sogers to help her keep a slip of a gal that don't weigh over a hundred pound, nor stan' over 've feet and an inch in her high-heeled shoes! Away, lad, away, and let your two boys toddle arter ye."

"Yes, mother," said the partisan, and looked wishfully at Judith, who was bearing this scene with what philosophy she could. Possibly he felt a faint hope that she would say something encouraging. If he did, he was disappointed; for she remained silent and unobservant of him. His face was first mournful, then angry; he stalked from the house with an oath, followed by his two attendants. Judith heard them mount their horses and gallop away. She was glad; the sound of their departing steps gave her inexpressible relief. She was left with one of her own sex, and to her ingenuous and hopeful disposition, it seemed impossible that she could not melt Mother Hadley's harshness. Time was worth too much to waste, and she assailed the woman's better nature at once with every moving argument that she could think of; but she was made of sterner stuff than she had imagined, and her eloquent appeals fell fruitless on the flinty substance of her heart. She grew irate, at length, and showing her a couch, peremptorily ordered her to bed and to sleep.

The log cabin was a common affair in those days, and made a very comfortable home for the early settlers. Mother Hadley's was divided into two compartments; one for sleep, the other for all the ordinary purposes of life.

"Go in, gal—go in!" said Captain Deb, decisively, pointing to the door of the first-mentioned room. "Go in, and dream of bein' a lady and the wife of my son, Christian, with his royal red, and his long sword, with plantations and slaves, and the confidence of the king."

There was no help for Judith. The woman's strength and determination overcame her weakness and weariness. She and Meg were pushed into the narrow room. It had not even a window to admit the light of the sun, or of the moon and stars. The slender tallow candle which Mrs. Hadley left them, burned dimly, making dark and fluctuating shadows on the walls.

Meg and Judith seated themselves upon the bed, and looked at each other inquiringly.

"We's done gone lost," said the former encouragingly. "The Continental boys is whipped, the red-coats hab got de whole world, de plantation is burned up, Mas'r Redmon' is gone de Lor' on'y knows where, Missy Miriam and de colonel am ol'ar perished, and de Liberty am jes' nowhere!"

Judith did not answer the lamentations of Meg, simply because she knew not what to say. She allowed her to go on, and gather all their griefs into one mournful heap.

"Whar's de use talkin' 'bout freedom? We's got too much of it, I s'pect; got de freedom to wander all over de world 'thout house an' home, or plantation, or niggers; freedom to hide in de woods, and to skulk 'bout like no 'count runaways. Don't want nebber to hear no more 'bout the sentimental congress, Mas'r Washin'ton, and de spread eagle. Lor! Miss Judith, jes' give me a good house to live in, an' plenty to eat and drink, an' a quantity o' good clothes to wear, and I doesn't keer for all de liberty ye could crowd into Carliny."

Meg rocked herself to and fro on the bed, and grieved over the fallen fortunes of the Redmonds.

"Where's de hominy and de corncake? where's de bacon and de egg? where's de singin' and de fiddlin' at night on de old plantation? Who'll take keer o' de corn, de cotton, de sugar-cane, and grow de indigo? Dear! dear! de world's jes' come to an end, an' we's poor critters, de best on us. Dey say King George heself is comin' 'cross de water to settle in de Carliny State. Golly, missus! Won't he cut up de liberty men! He rides in his carriage an' four, the king does, with a crown o' gold on his head, and a power o' money. Better gib up, missus, an' turn tory wid de rest of 'em. I'm done gone an' made up my mind to be a Britisher."

The door was heard to open in the other part of the cabin.

"Be quiet," said Judith. Both put their eyes to a crevice to see who came, and both were shocked at the sight of Jaffer, the runaway, on the threshold. Captain Deb confronted him with her oaken staff, erect and stern. Clearly, his looks did not please her. He was laboring under strong excitement, unarmed, apparently, but sufficiently terrible in his half-nakedness.

The two looked at each other a moment in silence, as if each were trying to discover the vulnerable points of the other.

"What sent ye?" demanded Captain Deb. "And why do ye open doors and come in 'thout knockin', like a prowlin' thief of the night?"

Jaffer cast a sullen, half-menacing glance at Mother Hadley, shut the door, and slipped the large wooden bolt into its place. His person was now fully revealed, and formed as unpleasant a picture as the eye could well rest upon. There were wounds and scratches on his hands, arms, and face, which added much to the grimness of his aspect. Mrs. Hadley maintained her ground, but held her staff more firmly.

"Are you a dumb devil?" she added, sharply. "Has your thick tongue forgotten human speech?"

"She's here; Cap'n Chris brought her."

He looked eagerly about the room.

"Who's here, thick-head!" asked the woman, fearlessly.

"The gal—Mas'r Redmon's gal—Judy! 'Tother one's burnt up," replied the negro, in a muttering, jerking voice.

"There's no 'Judy' here; not for you, leastwise. So if that's the arrand you come on, you can turn and go back, and say Deb Hadley sent ye."

"Seed the cap'n take her from de plantation. Black Jaffer follered—tracked him like a dog—run like a wolf with his nose to de groun'. Cap'n stop here—leave Judy—go 'way."

Jaffer glowered ferociously at Mrs. Hadley.

"What have you to do with my son Christian, with his sword, and his shoulder-knots, and his royal red? What have you to do with white natur, any way, white female natur in partic'lar? Out o' my cabin! out into the night, which is your own brother, and into the swamp, which is your habitation."

"In yer! in yer!" growled Jaffer, pointing to the door, the other side of which stood Judith and Meg, trembling with apprehension.

Mrs. Hadley promptly placed herself be-

tween the black and the point indicated by his sooty finger.

"She's for my son Christian, and you'll pass over my body to git her. I know your malice, that you hate the Redmonds, and have sworn vengeance on the whole family; but you'll do no murderin' and devil's-work here. I'm Deb Hadley, and if you harm me, my son Christian will hang ye higher than the seven stars."

Imagine the sensations of Judith and Meg! This danger crowned all the terrors of the night. They trusted in the prowess of the brave woman, who was manifestly disposed to resist the ruffian to the last.

The black stared at his antagonist a full minute without moving a muscle of his great body; then chuckled, and looked inquisitively around the room, as if in search of something. His eyes stopped on a stout piece of rope trailing from a peg near the door. Nearly over his head where he was standing, was a strong iron hook, with a leg of venison suspended upon it, which he detached and flung upon the floor. Seizing the rope, he made one end fast to the hook, and formed a running noose of the other. His expression during this time was indescribably sinister, and his sidelong glances at the woman were full of evil.

"What now, Satan?"

"He, he! ho, ho! hangin' is the thing. Glad ye mentioned dis yer!"

"You're drunk, beast!" retorted Mrs. Hadley, who felt uneasy, but was careful not to exhibit signs of shrinking.

"You's seen rebels hung, ole woman; good for dem—good for you, too. He, he! Jaffer hang Cap'n Deb, an' live here hisself!"

His nostrils dilated, and his eyes rolled in his head with frightful glee.

"You're a fool!" said Mrs. Hadley. "You can't hang a person there; the rope is too long. Put a woman of my size in that noose, and her feet would touch the floor."

"Come along," growled Jaffer, "or I'll throw ye on the fire and burn ye! Die easy this yer way; hard t'other."

This, to him, novel way of hanging Mother Hadley having once entered his head, grew every moment stronger. No power could have persuaded him to abandon his purpose. He felt a phrenzied delight in the perspective struggles of the woman who presumed to oppose his despotic will. That he could carry out his diabolical design without a sharp contest, did not appear possible; but that was an item that the black had evidently felt no anxiety about. He trusted to his great physical strength, and the terror he could inspire by menaces.

Dame Hadley had been quietly studying the human animal, and laying plans in agreement with her conclusions. She saw his muscles quivering with strength and impatience, and knew that the crisis could not be long delayed. She thought of her son, Christian, and listened anxiously to hear the tramp of his horse. To attempt to reason with the being before her, she knew was out of the question.

"You may strangle me, Jaffer; yet, I won't give up the gal that my son, Christian, told me to keep. But I never was hanged in my life, and I don't know how to be no more 'n a child. I've give you shelter many a time, and food to eat when you's well-nigh famished; and I hope you won't be cruel with an old body that never harmed ye. There's a drop o' good liquor in that keg there; take a sip on't, and maybe it'll warm and soften your heart."

Jaffer caught the vessel, drained it, and hurled it through the only window the cabin possessed.

"Now for it, ole woman!" he shouted, putting on all the ferocity of his repulsive features.

"Not a bit on't, till you shorten the rope, and tell me how it's done. If I've got to go, I don't want to make a botch on't."

Jaffer wound a portion of the rope around the hook, and pushed a chair under it.

"This way, you witch! this way! He, he! ho, ho!"

He stepped into the chair, thrust his curly head through the noose, and glared with fiendish exultation at Mother Hadley. The chair sank from under him; there was a creak and a crash, and Jaffer hung suspended by the neck.

Mrs. Hadley had touched a secret spring,

and a trap-door had fallen downward into a cellar beneath the cabin. He was heavy, and a sudden descent of three feet gave him a terrific shock, confused his faculties, and drew the cord chokingly tight. He quivered an instant, clutched at the rope, and tried to gather his limbs up to obtain a footing upon the floor; but, as often as he touched it, Captain Deb pushed him back with her staff. He lifted his body with his hands, and begged piteously for relief.

"O Lord, missus! O Lord! I's only funnin'! Le' me down—le' me down, an' I'll go right away, an' neber, neber come back! O good Cap'n Deb! O good Cap'n Deb!"

In answer to this appeal, Mrs. Hadley bestowed such hearty thwacks upon his fingers that they relaxed their hold, and his arms fell convulsed at his side.

"Funnin', was ye? you black Satan! Well, I'm funnin' now. How do ye like it, eh? Hangin' is fine sport, isn't it?"

Jaffer roared, begged, and struggled. His gigantic frame writhed and quivered frightfully.

Judith and Meg beheld the shocking spectacle with awe and astonishment. When, in the agony of suffocation, he made attempts to grasp the rope, the remorseless staff of Deb Hadley beat down his arms.

Judith could scarcely command her emotions, and turned from the sight dizzy and faint. The gasping respiration of the black finally ceased; his breast no longer heaved; his limbs subsided into quietness, and he hung, without motion, a dark and revolting object.

CHAPTER XXI.

IN WHICH A MARRIAGE CEREMONY IS PERFORMED.

"The race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong," moralized Deborah Hadley, as she surveyed the gigantic form of Jaffer. "The brute had strength, but not the cunning to match a woman. He was an idle, vicious, prowlin' cur, as likely to shed royal as rebel blood. Well, I've saved the hangman trouble and done the country a sarvice. Heart alive! how I tremble! I haven't been so nigh my eend in a long time. But I didn't give her up; no, I kept her for my son Christian. 'Twas white natur ag'in black natur, and the white has carried the day. Well," she continued, looking at the remains of Jaffer, "the creetur 'pears to be quite done for. The fool! to try his wit ag'in Deb Hadley."

The clatter of iron-shod feet was heard.

"It's my son Christian!" said the old woman. "If he has ridden far, he has ridden fast. This won't be a pooty sight for him on his weddin'-night, so I'll put it out o' the way."

She cut the rope with a knife, and the body of Jaffer fell heavily into the cellar. She drew up the door and fastened it. Why the trap was constructed in that peculiar manner, with a stout hook over it, can only be guessed at. If some of the dark secrets of that period could be told, conjecture would doubtless yield to certainty, and the uses of that contrivance would cease to be a mystery.

By the time Mrs. Hadley had concealed all evidence of her work, her son entered the cabin, followed by a man dressed in a suit of shabby black, which appeared much too small to fit his person, which was rather tall and athletic. His hat was in keeping with the rest of his externals, showing signs of recent brushing and smoothing. The frayed edges of the brim seemed to have been polished with blacking, to keep up its sombre respectability. His neck-cloth was of white cotton, and of remarkable width. His hair was long, straight, nearly of flax color, and soberly put away behind his ears. His whiskers, which were rather sparse, were of the same hue, and were noticeable because not generally worn by clergymen at that time. His face was pale and lugubriously solemn. Clearly, the man thought the universal world was going to wreck and ruin as fast as was conveniently possible.

He carried a prayer-book in his hand, and appeared ready for any emergency in the legitimate way of his profession. His gaze wandered somewhat hurriedly around the room, as soon as he found himself within it, finally resting, with mild dignity, on Deborah Hadley.

"Well, mother?" said Christian.

"All safe an' snug, my soger-boy."

"Nothing has happened?" queried the captain, with hesitation.

"Much has happened, but the gal is there."

I'm sorry you haven't set your mind on a willin' bride; but what is, must needs be, and what has happened, we must abide by," quoth Mrs. Hadley.

"Verily, I am glad, sister Hadley, that thy mind is so seasoned with grace," said the parson, "for resignation is one of the principal virtues of a Christian. Surely it is refreshing to meet with one, in these degenerate times, in whom the word is not the savior of death unto death, but of life unto life. I trust, Mrs. Hadley—"

"My name is Deb Hadley, often an' 'totherwise called Cap'n Deb; and wry faces, and highfalutin isn't the kind o' comfort that I need."

"Still, madam, I may entertain a hope that the seed, in your case, has fallen on good soil, and brought forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness," he continued, in an edifying tone.

"As for fruit," said Deborah Hadley, "there's but little on't that's worth eatin' in the country. I did raise a few crab-apples one year, but they wa'n't of no 'count. I'm a plain, matter-of-fact body, and flambergasted speeches don't greatly affect me. What's your name, you solemn creetur?"

"There's but little in a name, as the poet says; and 'a rose by any other name would smell as sweet'; but if 'twill be for your spiritual delectation, I will inform you that my earthly and temporal appellation is Elijah Timothy Holdfast, by the grace of God and my terrestrial primogenitors."

"I can't speak none o' the Ingin languages, but I pooty ginerly know what I want, and what my son Christian wants; which, at present, is no more nor less nor a harmless chit of a gal to be his wife, to cook his victuals, and look arter his rigimentals. Dear goodness! how your eyes wander about. You ha'n't got no buddily ailments, have ye?"

"Woman," answered Elijah T. Holdfast, "I am as one called at the eleventh hour to labor in the vineyard, and if I get my penny I shall be content."

"Hard money is dyin' source in the colonies just now, and if you git paid off in it, you'll do better nor the Continentalers, a pesky sight; although a penny for more nor half a day's work is, to my mind, rather slim wages. Howsomever, your trade don't make no great wear an' tear on coats and breeches; yet I've noticed more nor once that preachin' an' prayin' gives an excellent appetite."

"I'm aware," replied Elijah, "that there are those in orders among us who love the flesh-pots of Egypt, and think more of creature comforts than of the building up of Zion."

"Away with your flummery! I'll hear no more on't!" cried Christian. Then to the woman: "How is it, mother? Have you brought her round any? Is she more reconciled?"

"I've held no discourse with her since you went away, son Christian, havin' had other matter to take up my time. That runaway beast, Jaffer has been here, full of revenge and mischief, wantin' the gal."

"Did you let her go?" demanded Christian, fiercely.

"Marry come up! Do you think I'm a child, to be scared by thick lips and a flat nose? No, no! I'd give the child to a wolf sooner, or a black bear. I withstood him face to face, and he threatened me with death. We had a terrible time, he and I."

"Where is he? I see no blood—no sign of a struggle," answered Christian.

The woman took the candle from a table, sprang the trap-door, and getting upon her knees, held the light so its rays streamed into the cellar.

"Look!" said Deb Hadley, grimly.

Christian and the parson gazed into the dim abyss, and saw the body of Jaffer lying in a heap, as it had fallen. Both shivered.

"Mother! you are a lioness!" said Christian, in a subdued voice.

"For my son Christian, yes. You told me to keep her, and I kept her. The brute thought to hang me; but I put my wit agin his strength, and," she added, significantly pointing downward with the long forefinger of her right hand, "there he is!"

"A mere savage," said Christian, "though sometimes useful. I'm glad the scoundrel has got his deserts. It was an oversight not leavin' a guard."

"The wretch!" muttered Holdfast, with an expression of disgust.

"What are those steps outside?" inquired Deb.

"Some of my dragoons that I ordered to follow and keep watch at the door. I don't care to be surprised by prowlin' parties of whigs. Come! let's hurry up what's to be done."

"Now has the trying moment arrived?" sighed Judith, who had been a trembling auditor to this conversation.

"Come out," said Mother Hadley, opening the door, "and don't be an obstinate little fool. Here's my son Christian, with his commission in his pocket, and his sword and a parson by his side, ready to make you his wife—an honor that many a gal would jump at this night."

"Spare me—spare me to-night! I have seen so much that is dreadful that I am well nigh mad! Go, fearful woman, and go you, Christian Hadley!" cried poor Judith, greatly excited.

"Perverse—perverse as ever!" said the captain, impatiently.

"Poor dear!" said Meg, supporting and embracing her mistress. "If they don't let her alone, she's done killed. I never seed sich works as dis yer. Why, she's twitchin' all over. Spasms, this is—clar spasms!"

"Truly, the maiden is sorely distressed," observed the Rev. Mr. Holdfast, advancing to Judith with some show of sympathy. "She needs a few words of comfort and counsel, which it is my duty to give."

"Leave me!—leave me!" said Judith, faintly.

"Young woman," replied the parson, gravely, "I came not for thy bodily or spiritual harm, but to unite thee to one who will soon be great in the land, as he is already mighty in war."

Judith sobbed hysterically, and clung to Meg.

"Don't let them hurt me, Meg! Keep them back!—keep them back!"

"Meg'll stan' by ye to the last! They can't git her 'way from ye, 'less they cut off her arms. She'll hol' ye tight, and she'll die with ye, bress de Lor'! Go 'long, you miser'ble creturs! Don't ye see dis yer'll kill her?" cried the mulatto girl, who was disposed to adhere faithfully to her mistress.

"Retire a little, good friends, while I soothe and prepare her mind for what is to follow. Obviously, she is blinded by Satan so that she cannot clearly discern the signs of the times, nor appreciate the honor of this alliance. We read in Scripture of seven devils that possessed one woman; let us hope that in this case the number is less by at least a half."

"That will be three and a half—which, in my 'pinion, is enough," observed Mother Hadley, dryly.

"That number I can exorcise and speedily put down, according to the grace that is within me."

"Use any exorcism you like, so it's short," replied Christian, falling back. "I must return to my command in an hour; and there is, at least, a good thirty-minutes' gallop between me and the bivouac. Fall back, mother, fall back, and let the solemn owl patter his nonsense in her ears."

"I have little love for his cloth," quoth Mrs. Hadley, "and care not to trust much to them who prate so loudly of their own piety. Where did you pick up this black-coated parrot?"

"Hush! not so loud," cautioned Christian. "We need him, and therefore must not give him ill words—leastwise till the work is done."

"You have sharp eyes," resumed the woman, dropping her voice, "and a quick wit; but I still say, that I like not the man. There's a heap of hypocrisy in him."

"Hypocrisy is the universal coverin' of human nature," responded the captain.

Meanwhile the parson had taken Judith's hand; and, subduing his voice to a more melodious key, said:

"Young woman, it grieves me to see thee oppose thy will to the manifest designs of Providence."

"There, mother! did you hear that? It was good. You have to talk to women-folks about Providence to keep 'em within bounds," said Christian, aside.

"Stuff!" said Mrs. Hadley.

"The young officer," resumed the parson.

"who proposes the honor of an alliance, is reputed to be a deserving, rising young man, and a staunch friend of the king."

"Go! go!" gasped Judith, making a feeble attempt to extricate her hand.

"Go! don't ye here missus tell ye to go? Wish to de Lor' Somerton's dragoons was here," cried Meg, stoutly.

"Look!" said Mrs. Hadley. "He stoops—he whispers!"

"'Twas something to bring her round, I dare say," answered Christian.

"She's fainted, I do believe," added his mother. "There! he's mutterin' somethin' to the yeller gal. Come, parson; a'n't you ready?"

"She has swooned; she cannot hear me," he said, in a low voice.

"Perform the ceremony! perform the ceremony!" ordered the captain, peremptorily. "It matters not whether she is sensible or insensible; it's all the same to me. Mumble over the words, man! We can tell her what's happened, afterwards."

"It's a sin and a shame!" protested Meg.

The parson, as he bent over Judith in an apparent attempt to resuscitate her, said to Meg: "Slip forward your arm under hers, and do as I tell you." Then turning to Hadley, he added:

"Approach and join hands."

Christian advanced; a passive, unresisting hand was laid in his, and a marriage ritual of some kind was hurriedly pronounced.

"You've got the maid's hand, and not the mistress!" said Dame Hadley, when the ceremony was completed.

"I have, by—! But what's the odds, as long as it is the mistress I'm to have," answered the captain, with a coarse laugh.

Deborah Hadley looked at Holdfast suspiciously.

"We are husband and wife, are we, my old cock?" queried Christian, with manifest interest in the question.

"I have so pronounced you."

"And she is legally mine?"

"I see no way of separating those who have been united by one duly and truly qualified for the work. The young woman is as much your wife as she ever can be."

"Then I am content! I thank ye, parson, for your services, and here are some golden guineas for you. Now I must away, for the Royal Americans by this time expect their leader. Faith! 'tis a brave night's work. I'll post a guard round the cabin to protect my bride. Take good care of her, mother. There'll be a scene when she comes to herself and knows what's happened; but we've got the law on our side, haven't we, Holdfast?"

"To think sich a drefful thing should happen as dis yer!" mumbled Meg.

"Hear the fool take on! One would think that her mistress was of better blood than my son Christian, in his royal red, with his jinglin' spurs, his long sword, his gold shoulder-knots, and his commission in his pocket!"

The captain cast a look half triumphant, half affectionate at the insensible form of Judith, then stalking from the cabin, gave some orders to the men outside, mounted his horse, and rode away with the Rev. Mr. Holdfast.

CHAPTER XXII.

ALL FOR LOVE.

In coming back to this hard, conscious world of facts and realities, Judith Redmond expected to see the solemn face of the parson and the moody brow of Christian Hadley; but, instead, saw only the masculine form of Mother Deb, and felt the clasping arms of Meg. She had an unpleasant impression that something fatal to her own happiness had happened, but could not immediately determine its nature. The old woman was chafing her hands, and making various friendly attempts to restore her languid circulation and revive her benumbed faculties.

"She's a pooty and delicate dove," she said, struck with the peculiar whiteness of her skin, the smallness and perfection of her limbs, and the beauty of her features. "She'll fetch round presently. Gals allers do fetch round arter they've swooned away. A'n't what they used to be, gals isn't. They could stan' up like grenadiers when I's of her age; but now you can push the soft, dainty creature over with a straw."

"O Miss Judith! Miss Judith!" moaned Meg.

"Don't call my darter-in-law, 'Miss Judith,' you yeller image!" said Mother Deb, promptly.

"What de Lor' heaven's sake will I call her?" demanded Meg, with a visible show of temper.

"Mrs. Cap'n Hadley, the legal wife of my son Christian," answered Deb, with a look and gesture that awed the simple-minded mulatto.

Judith gently pushed away the woman; and, by the aid of Meg, sat up and looked slowly and vaguely about her. Mrs. Hadley suddenly sprang at her, kissed her forehead, and said:

"Joy to ye, darter-in-law!"

"Daughter-in-law!" repeated Judith, like an echo.

"The lawfully wedded wife of my fine son, Cap'n Christian Hadley, of the Royal Americans!" added Deb, with pride and dignity.

"What does it mean, Meg?" asked Judith.

"You's done gone married, missus!" answered Meg, coming at once to the point.

"Mrs. Hadley," quoth Deb, with extraordinary politeness, "what'll you choose to have cooked for your breakfast? This is your house and your castle, darter-in-law; and you can reign here like George's self, and your husband, the cap'n, will bring trophies from the war to lay at your feet. The rebels is whipped, and the liberty they talked about is gone to the dogs. Cheer up, deary, cheer up!"

"O Meg! can what this woman tells me be true?"

Judith's face was the picture of indescribable dismay.

"I s'pect they's done you a drefful wrong!" replied Meg, crying piteously for the sorrows of her young mistress. "The man with de white table-cloth round his neck, mumbled over a heap o' stuff while you's layin' dead-like in my arms, which seemed to please de cap'n mighty well. 'Twas an out-an'-out shame, missus."

"Infamous! infamous!" articulated Judith, faintly.

"I tole 'em so!—I tole 'em so! But they didn't mind a straw 'bout it. I jest held ye tight, and tole the cap'n he couldn't have ye, noways. I's stuck to ye, Miss Judy, and 'pears like they'd had to cut these yer arms o' mine off to get you 'way."

"Stop talkin', gal!" said Deborah, imperiously.

"The Lor' has give me a tongue to use, and it'll be a dry time when I don't use it. My mad is up, and I don't keer. Don't go for to look spiteful at me; for I's a good 'eal 'cited, and a'n't 'countable for my conceptions. You a'n't more'n half woman, noways. Whoever seed a critter rigged as you be? Go 'long, with yer man's black coat and yer red-flannel skirt! You's no better nor colored folks, nohow; and seems to me like, that the days 'll be forty-eight hours long when Miss Judy calls ye mother-'n-law."

"Darter-in-law," said Mrs. Hadley, quietly, "don't let your yeller gal insult your husband's mother; which 'll save me the trouble o' droppin' her into the cellar with Black Jaffer."

This threat had a restraining influence upon Meg, who could imagine nothing more terrible than the incarceration referred to.

"Woman," said Judith, "I know nothing of what you are saying. The ceremony of which you speak is but a mockery, and without binding force and validity. No responses having been given, and the profane mummery being carried on while I was unconscious, the transaction possessed no legal power."

"Peace, darter-in-law! What is done is done, and a thousand parsons can't undo it."

Judith clasped her hands in despair.

"Hist!" said Mother Deb, holding up an admonishing hand. "Some one comes this way, and at a right smart gait, too."

The two sentinels at the door were at that moment heard to challenge some one, and the next instant the door was pushed open, and Guy Deering rushed in, panting with exercise.

"Hide me, good woman, hide me!" he exclaimed, hurriedly. "I am pursued by the rebel dragoons. My strength is spent, and there is no escape unless you secrete me and deceive them."

Nerved with sudden strength, Judith arose, and made a step toward the fugitive.

"I hear the tramp of horses. Fly, wretched man, fly!" she cried.

"Fly!" he repeated, turning to her with a bitter smile. "As well might an eagle skim the air with a broken wing! I am hunted down, have reached this cover, and can go no farther."

Deering rested against the wall for support. "They come! they come!" said Judith; and, springing to the door, pushed the stout bolt to its place.

"Well done, darter-in-law! 'tis a brave beginnin'!" said Mrs. Hadley, approvingly.

Judith glanced at Deering, to see if his countenance changed; but he did not appear to heed the woman's remark.

"Will you hide me?" cried Deering; "or will you see me murdered?"

"Yes, yes! we will hide you," replied Judith. "Good woman," she added, "for Heaven's sake, conceal him!"

"If you mean it, gal, it can be done; but it will depend on you, and I a'n't sartin that I can trust ye. Them that are comin' are your friends, and how do I know but you'll tell all for the sake o' your own liberty, and betray this poor lad to death."

Judith was in a painful dilemma, but quickly decided between herself and her lover, whose earnest eyes were upon her.

"If it rests with me, I swear to you that I will save him!" she solemnly answered.

"Will you trust her, lad?" demanded Deb.

"With my life—with my salvation!" he exclaimed.

The spurs of the dragoons were heard rattling upon the ground as they dismounted, mingled with the clanking of their heavy sabres.

"Follow!" said Mrs. Hadley, seizing the candle, and striding into the sleeping-room. Approaching the bed, she stripped it in an instant to its straw-mattress.

"Jump into the middle, lad, and lay down as close as if you's ready for the undertaker."

"I obey!" said Deering, stretching himself upon the mattress.

"Play dead well, or dead you'll be," said the woman, tossing the feather-bed upon him as if it were light as air. Smoothing it down, she laid the pillows and spread the coverings deftly. The last hurried touch given, she threw back the sheets, and snatching a white cap from a nail, thrust it toward Judith, as if her arm was a spear to transfix her.

The girl's face grew deadly pale.

"Put it on!" hissed Deb, with terrible energy.

While Judith stood hesitating and mute, there was a thunderous knocking at the door.

"It's life and death," muttered Deb; and, seizing the cap from Judith's paralyzed hand, drew it over her dark curls, knotted it under her chin, then lifting her in her determined and masculine arms, placed her upon the bed, and drew the coverings over her. She next caught Meg with no dainty grasp, and seated her on the bed beside her mistress.

"Open! open!" shouted the voice of Sergeant Giles. "Open, old hag, or I'll beat your nest down about your ears."

"Gal," said Mrs. Hadley, sternly, looking at Judith, "if you've got narves, show 'em. If you play the fool and the coward, he is lost. Meg! sit still, and do as your mistress tells ye. If questioned, let her answer; and what she says, say you."

"Down with the door—down with it!" roared Giles, whose stock of patience was now entirely exhausted.

"Comin'! comin'!" cried Deb, at the top of her voice.

"Comin'! comin'!" mimicked Giles. "Hurry up, then, old magpie!" Mrs. Hadley deliberately opened the door, and, standing directly in it, demanded the cause of the disturbance.

"Stand aside, and you shall know our errand soon enough," answered Giles. The latter and Humphrey immediately drew their swords, and pushed into the cabin.

"Keep a good watch outside there, Tom Thornton," said the sergeant. "If he tries to escape through the window, cut him down with your sabre; if from the roof, shoot him with your musket."

"Stop, my rough soger-lad, and tell me why you rush into a lone woman's cabin in this blusterin' fashion?" said Captain Deb, nothing daunted.

"A white glove," quoth the sergeant, "often conceals a dirty hand, and a demure face sometimes conceals a deal of wickedness."

Our time is short, and we can't waste it in idle talk with a witch-wife like you. We have reason to think that you have given shelter and concealment to one of the most dangerous men on the Santee."

Giles looked at Mother Hadley, as if his eyes were corkscrews to draw out secrets with. She met his gaze with the utmost steadiness.

"Who might he be?" she inquired.

"The person we seek," said the chaplain, "is probably no stranger to you. Do not keep us waiting, but deliver him up at once, that he may suffer even the fate of Haman."

"Of whom do ye speak?" demanded Deb.

"Woman of Belial, do not practice vain and unavailing evasions; for I do assure you that we shall search every part of your dwelling so thoroughly that not so much as a mouse in the wall shall escape our eyes," returned Humphrey.

"If ye speak of my son Christian, he is many miles from here ere this; and if he was not, but hidden under this roof, do you think I'd lead ye to his secret lurkin'-place? If ye entertain such a thought, ye know naught of Deb Hadley. Ah! ye rebels, I'd be tore in pieces for my son Christian! Lord, Lord! he's finer nor ye all in his royal red, with his commission in his pocket, his spurs jinglin' on his heels, his sword clankin' by his side, and his gold shoulder-knots shinin' in the moon or shimmerin' in the sun!"

"A toothless hound seldom takes the wrong scent," replied Giles, "but you're at fault this time, Deb Hadley, either through misapprehension or design. We want Guy Deerin', and not Christian Hadley; though the good Lord knows that your son needs hangin', and 'll sooner or later come to it. We started the spy some ten minutes ago, and a hot chase he's had. We've earthed him, at last, I do believe."

"Marry, come up! If that's your business, look an' you will, and begone as soon as you may; for I like not your company. Here's a candle, and a good time may you have on't."

"A little pot is soon hot, and a small cabin is soon searched," said the man of proverbs. "Keep your post at the door, Tom Thornton. Now, Humphrey, let's see what we can see."

Giles took the candle from the apparently willing hand of Mrs. Hadley.

"Look sharp, sergeant, or you may have your labor for your pains. Where'll you begin, rebel, to search the premises of an honest woman?"

"A thread too fine spun will easily break, Dame Hadley," responded Giles, "therefore overact not your part, for this is a serious matter, and we shall take you at your word. He slipped the halter once, but this time we hope better things. Come on, parson."

"Of a truth, friend Giles, I am always ready; and though I use these carnal weapons, I wield them in a righteous cause, which removes from my soul the sin of blood-guiltiness. Lead on, sergeant; my sword and my strength are at thy service."

The sergeant held the candle over his head, and beheld, through a scant flooring of poles, the roof of the cabin.

"He might as well hide in a lighted lantern on there," he said, then shouted, in a stentorian voice:

"Keep your eyes open, you Tom Thornton! There should be a cellar beneath," he went on, in a more moderate tone, "and another room in that direction. What a good thing is philosophy; if we stand over a cellar, there should be a way to get to it. Open sesame, old woman!"

"Anything to oblige ye, my sourvy little sergeant," said Mrs. Deb, with remarkable sang froid, at the same time springing the trap.

"Sword and Bible, go down, and a heap o' good may it do ye," she added, in a voice of sovereign contempt.

"Sword and Bible," that is, the sergeant and chaplain, lowered themselves into the vault, the first taking the initiative. There was an interval of silence. The rays of the candle drove back a portion of the Egyptian darkness of the cellar. A solemn voice rolled up through the trap:

"In the name of God, avaunt! Down, devil, down! Come not before the time. I am a Christian minister, and have power over the spirits of darkness."

Mother Deb lifted up both her hands and laughed silently, but none the less heartily.

"To the devil with thy exorcisms, parson! Evidently this is, as the doctor would say, the post mortem remains of a defunct nigger;

and a very ugly nigger at that. Ah, chaplain, a peck of common sense is worth a bushel o' superstition," returned the sergeant, who had but little reverence for traditions or men, living or dead.

"Friend Giles, with all thy proverbs, thou hast a moiety of wisdom. Reason is sometimes the gift of the children of this world, who are often wiser in their generation than the children of light; an anomaly which the unspiritual-minded cannot understand. This is, indeed, the mortal composition of a negro, who manifestly died a painful and violent death."

"'Tis Satan asleep!" cried Deborah Hadley. "Tarry long, and he'll wake up and carry ye to his vaults below, with a great groanin' and creakin' of infernal machinery."

"Methinks," quoth the parson, "that the candle burns blue. Let us get out of this horrible pit!"

"Not till I've seen every corner on't," said the practical Giles. "Never saw I a devil worse nor myself. It's liberty that I fight for, and little care I for the malice of Satan or the power he can muster into the field in the shape of tory or Britisher, bond or free, black or white, dead or alive! In for a little in for much. If you've fired your broadside, parson, fall back; but I shall make a thorough thing on't, and report accordin' to the colonel or Cap'n Rainford."

"In this case, sergeant, thy cold and dogged intellect hath the best of it; thou art right. A man who believes in God, in Congress, and Washington, should fear nothing. But truly, this dark phantom is horrible! With the powers of darkness I struggle not with the sword, but with prayer and humiliation of the flesh."

Notwithstanding this protestation and admission, Humphrey was the first to come up; and he cast behind him glances of awe and perplexity. Nor was the doughty Giles much less affected by the grizzly spectacle; he was visibly glad to see the trap closed.

"It would appear," said the chaplain, "if human eyes are to be trusted, that a fellow-creature has here met his death."

"Fellow-creature!" repeated Giles, with a strong expression of contempt. "You don't call that black ape a fellow-creature, do ye? He forms, as 'twere, but the connecting link between monkeys and men. There's been no great mischief done, for the feller's deserved hangin' a dozen times. If I mistake not, it's the body of a desperate runaway from Redmond's plantation, and a great villain he's been. Now, parson, we'll search my lady's bower."

"You'll find as good a lady there as any in the land!" retorted Mrs. Hadley. "And she'd been in her innocent dreams afore this, if you hadn't disturbed her by your thumpin', and clatterin', and ill-manners ginerly."

"Chaplain, look well to yourself when a woman blusters. Open the door, Mistress Deb; I must e'en peep into this sanctuary of beauty."

"Spare your jokes, sergeant, for you'll need all your small shot when the Royal Americans start ye from your cover. The time was when Deb Hadley was as comely a gal as you'll find in a whole colony of sich. Beauty is but skin deep, but wit reaches to the brain. 'Tisn't for sich as you, sergeant, to be runnin' your nose into the sleepin' rooms of young women daintily brought up."

"Fling down the nests, and the rooks will be gone; so stan' aside, mistress, or oblige us by givin' that door a fling, that we may have a stare at that same innocence you have spoken of."

"If ye must be rude, open the door yourself; but I warn ye, if you insult the young woman, you'll have to account for it to more nor one."

The sergeant, having no great confidence in Deb's veracity, and little reverence for beauty, did not pause to pull the latch-string, but burst open the door with a stroke of his foot. His first emotions on entering must have been pretty decided, for he stopped short and stood as motionless as one of the old-fashioned bed-posts, and quite as stiff. The chaplain, pressing hard upon him, looked over his shoulder, while Deb brought up the rear like a veteran grenadier.

Judith raised herself a little in the attitude of alarm as the sergeant came in; and it was at her that that continental hero was gazing.

"How, in the name of Heaven!" he ex-

claimed, "came this dove in this hawk's nest?"

"Comparisons," quoth Mother Hadley, "are ojus. She's here under my ruff, and I'm her lawful protector."

"The countenance," said Humphrey, "is fair and not altogether unfamiliar to my eyes; it should be, methinks, one of the daughters of Squire Redmond."

"Both should be and is; and this is Meg, the yeller gal that came to the camp with Miss Grindle. Why one or the other is here, is more'n I can tell," answered Giles, in some perplexity.

"Good friends," said Judith, "what means this intrusion? Is it any service to the country that my privacy should be intruded upon?"

"The sin of ignorance is winked at; and we dreamed not that a darter of Squire Redmond's would be found in this den of toryism—this resort of Christian Hadley's marauders," replied the sergeant.

"Since you know that I am here, there can be no further excuse for remaining. The events of this night have already greatly disturbed me, and truly I need repose. Should you meet my father, tell him that I am safe."

"If God wills, I shall soon see him; for he is with Rainford, in a thousand troubles about his darters. Tell me, Miss Judith, what became of Somerton? Was he consumed in the house, or taken by the enemy?"

"Much I fear that the unfortunate colonel, together with my sister, Miriam, perished in the flames. Judge, then, sergeant, of the state of my mind, and leave me."

"Pardon me, young lady," said Humphrey, "and allow me to ask you if you are here of your own will?"

The eyes of Judith and Deborah Hadley met. The girl was painfully troubled.

"Seeing how comfortably I am provided for, I think you might solve that question yourself," she said, evasively.

"She come here like a bird with broken wings, and it would been a harder heart nor mine to refuse her shelter. I took her in and laid her in my own bed, and tried to comfort the poor thing; for much she stood in need on't," asserted Deb.

"Woman," said Giles, "if you've done this, you've changed your natur'; and it'll turn out, in my opinion, that there's some diviltry afoot that honest folks don't understand."

Judith stole a grateful look at the sturdy Giles; she heard the stifled respiration of Deering, and silently prayed that the scene might be shortened. She felt a choking sensation in her throat, and feared she should faint, unable to sustain such a trying part. She waved her hand for her two unwelcome visitors to depart.

"A thousand pardons, Miss Redmond, but we mustn't forget duty even for beauty. We believe that Guy Deerin' is somewhere in this cabin; hence the cause of our intrusion. We are makin' thorough search. Chaplain, look in that box and behind them clothes. I'll peep under the bed and feel about with my sabre a little, jest for form's sake; for Cap'n Rainford 'll question us up close, havin' made up his mind to give the spy a good hangin', sooner or later."

"Don't come no nigher Miss Judy!" said Meg, menacingly. "I'll write the ten commandments on yer face, if ye do!"

"My yeller charmer, your mistress is as safe as if she's in heaven," answered the sergeant, gallantly, stabbing the wall under the bed with his sword.

"Odds my life! what a brave rebel 'tis! He's hackin' to chips the royal logs of the cabin. A regiment of sich would carry the house by storm!" sneered Mrs. Hadley, lifting her gray eyebrows and putting her arms akimbo.

Judith was nearly dying with suspense. Love, fear, and timidity struggled within her.

"Rail on, woman," answered Giles, quietly, transfixing a petticoat with his sabre. "Your tongue is the worst part of ye, and 'll never be still till your feet p'int up'ard."

"It's the heart, man—it's the heart that's desperately wicked," corrected the chaplain. "As Paul says—"

"No matter what Paul says; it's what Rainford says that I care about!" retorted Giles, who now stood in the door, applying persuasive friction to his head.

"Cruel, cruel soger-boy! What a wicked wound you've give my bettermost petticoat,"

mocked Mrs. Deb, with a laugh that was peculiar both for its silence and significance.

The sergeant hung his head and walked thoughtfully from the little compartment, the chaplain preceding him.

"Keep rubbin' your head, sergeant dear, and you'll make it all straight anon. There's no harm in pokin' about the beds of timorous gals, and there's glory in stabbin' innocent gowns and petticoats with your sabre!"

"Humphrey," said Giles, abstractedly, "I a'n't satisfied. That Guy Deerin' come in, I feel sart'in; but that he's gone out, I'm not so sure. Come into the open air, Humphrey, and we'll hold a council o' war. All right there, Tom Thornton?"

"All right!" responded Tom.

"The butcher looked for his knife when he had it in his mouth," moralized the sergeant, and with Humphrey left the cabin. The two were heard conferring earnestly together outside, while those within awaited the result, with all those varied emotions which their respective positions rendered natural.

CHAPTER XXIII.

IN THE CELLAR.

Judith sprang from the bed the moment the door closed upon Giles and Humphrey.

"You have acted well!" said Deborah Hadley. "Be quiet a few minutes longer. There's a wind-mill in the sergeant's head that may turn him round one revolution too many. I've got ears as well as another, and must try to catch a word of that buzzin', for a word to the wise is sufficient."

The woman went softly to that side of the cabin where the voices could be heard most distinctly. Crouching upon the floor, she put her ear to the wall. The sergeant and his companion were but a few feet distant. The latter was satisfied with the search; not so with the former; a mischievous spite was whispering suspicion.

"It stands to reason," he said, "that a man, be he British or American, royalist or rebel, cannot sink into the earth or fly into the air. Parson, I've a feelin' that we've been in some way circumvented."

"You were always a fellow of dull and heavy comprehension, and like a vicious horse, ever ready to take the bit in your teeth and go your own way; had it been otherwise, you would long ago have been a subject of grace," Humphrey answered.

"I'm nobody's subject!" retorted Giles. "I cast off my allegiance when I took up arms for Congress."

"'Twould be well for you to remember, sergeant, that we're far from our broken and battered brigade, and our return likely to be cut off at any moment by straggling parties of Tories, or the impetuous fire-eaters of Tarleton. We've done all that any one could reasonably expect. As Paul says—"

"As I've told you, parson, it is what Rainford says that I care for, and I would thank you to mention no other commander in my hearin'; although the officer that you speak of may be very good in his way. There's a little insect in my ear that worries me. I can't go away content till I've taken another look. I was a little too tender of the feelin's of Miss Redmond; and, by-the-way, Humphrey, I've heard that there's somethin' atween her and this same Guy Deerin'; though I hope to the Lord it isn't true. As a thorough soper, I should have passed my sabre down through that bed a few times, with all delicacy and deference to the fair gal restin' like a snow-flake on one side on't."

"Truly, thou art wanting in respect to the sex. It would frighten the poor child within an inch of her life to see you thrusting and lunging at harmless beds and bolsters. Verily, the profession of arms has hardened thy heart."

The chaplain clanked his sabre, and, beside the sergeant, was as Goliath to David.

"Let not your tongue cut your throat; for you know there isn't a redder sabre in the sheath than yours. In battle, you are Satan, and all the rest of the time a saint. Saddle the right horse, my man! As for respect to the gal, I'll show her as much as if she's my own sweetheart. She loves Congress and Washin'ton; and if I say 'In the name of Congress, or in the name of Washin'ton,' it will be both law and gospel. Did you notice, Humphrey, that the gal had a wide-awake look, and was sometimes white and sometimes red in the face? Is it common, too, for young women

to go to bed with their day-clothes on? And mark you, sir! I saw a little slipper peepin' from beneath the bed-coverings, which strikes me is out o' the common order, and ag'in natur'."

Humphrey mused, throwing his weight upon one limb, and then upon the other.

"In the excitement, confusion, and terror of these times, the common usages of life are often violated; however, if you think it best, we'll return and go over our work again."

"A thing that is worth doing, is worth doing well. Let us move off a few steps, and then come back of a sudden; if there is anything in the wind, we may find them off their guard."

The two men walked out of ear-range, but Deborah Hadley had heard sufficient. Judith had observed her attentively, and now gathered from her expression that there was new danger.

"Come out, lad, come out!" she cried. "They're comin' back!"

Deering sprang from his hiding-place, where he had been half smothered. Drops of moisture were on his brow. He gave Judith a look of unspeakable gratitude.

"Sweet girl, I owe you life!" he murmured, as he passed her in obedience to a signal from Deb, who opened the trap-door.

"Why is this?" asked Judith. "Was he not safer where he was? If so, to save human life—"

"No, no! The suspicions of the sergeant are already directed to the bed; he'll probe every inch on't with his long sabre."

"And if he goes into the cellar, discovery will be equally certain," said Judith, in much alarm.

"Distress not yourself, dear young lady, for one who lives in daily expectation of a violent death; one who has counted the cost, and will not shrink from the payment when the bill of mortality becomes due. It is pleasant to know that I have your sympathy, and that notwithstanding I am infamous in Miss Redmond's eyes—"

"Cease, for Heaven's sake! your enemies are at the door. Down! down! and God in his mercy save you."

"The door is fastened," said Mother Hadley. "I can delay them a minute." She thrust the fitful candle through the opening in the floor. "Look!" she continued, coldly and firmly. "Behold that carcass; a devil once lived in it, but has gone out, not by fasting nor prayer, but by the rope. Jump down, and hide under that black lump of mortality. Pull his great body and limbs over you. Do not fear him; he is more harmless now than for any time these twenty years. Shrink not—all are of a color in the dark."

The spy threw a look of ineffable meaning at Judith, and sprang into the vault.

"It never shall be said," muttered the woman, "that Deb Hadley hasn't done what she might for a friend in trouble."

Then to Miss Redmond:

"Back to bed, gal, back to bed! Don't fear their swords, for your person's as safe with 'em, for that matter, as 'twould be at your own h'arth-stone. Behave as well as you did afore, and we'll outwit 'em, yet. Meg, you image! in with your mistress, and see that your tongue keeps its place."

She closed the trap. The sergeant was by this time kicking at the door.

"Who's come now?" demanded Mrs. Hadley, ill-humoredly.

"Them that hasn't seen fit to go; so shp the bolt, Cap'n Deb, and don't keep two honest men on the wrong side of the door."

Deb bustled to the door with an affectation of promptness, and pulled some seconds at the bolt.

"Be patient, my dears; it'll start presently. There—here it comes!"

"She is too affectionate; the wolf has crawled into the lamb's skin!" grumbled Giles.

"Don't mind disturbin' a lone woman, or frightenin' to death poor Miss Redmond. Don't be partic'lar, sergeant, because in war-time murder, an' robbery, an' fright go for nothin'. Spin this thing out as long as you can, for presently my son Christian'll be here, with his Royal Americans, and his long sword by his side."

"The quicker he comes, the better!" retorted the chaplain, grasping, suddenly, the hilt of his sabre.

"Pestilent hypocrite! you're throwed off your guard now an' then!" exclaimed Deb,

with an abrupt return of her fierceness. "I know what ye come for, ye rebel hounds! The gal's in there; go and murder her, if ye like; but remember that her father's a rebel and she's of your own way o' thinkin'."

"Nobody talks o' murder, old woman! 'Tisn't the Continental boys that make war on women and abuse helpless gals. Away, you sparrow-hawk!" answered Giles, gruffly. He then raised his voice, and added: "'Tis I, Sergeant Giles, Miss Redmond. Don't be afeard. The liberty boys know their friends as well as they do their enemies. God knows we wont disturb ye more'n we can help; but the fact is, we a'n't yet satisfied. Rainford is a devil of a feller when his blood's up, and you wouldn't want me faulted, I'm sure, jes' for neglectin' to murder the bed with my sabre."

Giles gently opened the door leading to the suspected quarter.

"I had hoped," said Judith, complainingly, "that after the terrible excitements of this eventful night, I should be permitted a few moments of undisturbed repose."

The pale face of Judith, the mournful severity of her words, taken in conjunction with her surroundings, brought Giles to a full-stop.

"Poor, dear lamb! She can't stan' dis yer much longer!" whined Meg, dolorously. "De life's jest about gone out her precious body. I wish to de Lor' dar wa'n't no Congress an' no liberty!"

"I beg pardon, miss—I really don't mean—that is, I didn't come—" the sergeant began but the word stuck in his throat.

"I had flattered myself," resumed Judith, in the same deprecating tone, "that the daughter of your friend, Sergeant Giles, would find a place in every patriotic heart."

"By Heavens, Miss Judith, you have two places in mine!" cried Giles. "If you wanted it for a pin-cushion, I don't know but I should take it out and give it to you. But I've got a stern mistress, whose name is Duty, young lady; and, as a soper-lad, I must stick to her through thick and thin. Duty, miss, says I must search that bed you're layin' on; and on my knees, as 'twere, I beg of you to rise."

"He's goin' to steal the dientical bed she's layin' on, and he's goin' to drive her up at the pint of his sword in her night-gown!" said Meg, rocking her body to and fro, in much apparent distress.

"I should suppose that my friendless situation," resumed Judith, determined to make as much delay as possible, "would soften the heart of Cornwallis himself, were he present, to witness my distress."

Giles turned to the chaplain for assistance, for Tarleton's dragoons would not have been so formidable as Judith's eyes.

"The duty is not a pleasant one," said Humphrey, coming in a prompt and resolute manner to the rescue, "but we know what is expected of us. Miss Redmond is quite aware that we would shed our blood in her defence; and her plausible words seem to me but an idle pretext to gain time, for some object best known to herself."

"Whatever may be your virtues, reverend sir, charity does not appear to be one of them. I am in your power, and you can enforce your commands. I really feel too weak to arise. Give me your hand, Meg; these gentlemen must be obeyed. There must needs be a British spy concealed in the bolster or in the straw-mattress."

"Beauty is duty, Miss Judith," said Giles, and the moment Miss Redmond's feet touched the floor, stalked sturdily to the bed, and commenced a slashing assault upon it with his sword.

"What bravery! what courage!" laughed Mrs. Hadley.

The sergeant having probed the bed to his satisfaction, turned from it with obvious disappointment.

"I thought it meant something," he muttered. "Her manner justified suspicion."

"I hope you are satisfied?" observed Judith.

"We are convinced that the man we seek is not here. I trust you will bear witness, Miss Redmond, that we have discharged our duty," said the chaplain, bowing, and retiring into the next room.

"One more look into the cellar," added Giles, "and I shall be satisfied."

"What!" screamed Mrs. Hadley. "Must there be more botheration? Havin' give ye

leave to search my house like an honest woman, can't you go away decently, or must ye hang round till mornin', keepin' them awake as sorely needs sleep, and burnin' out my candles as if a lone widder hadn't nothin' else to do but make 'em."

Humphrey, having the unpleasant recollection of Jaffer in his mind, added his voice to the woman's, in an attempt to dissuade Giles from his purpose. But he was a man not to be turned aside when once resolved. Deb, after some argumentation, reluctantly sprang the trap.

"Down," said she, "if down you must; but my word for't, it'll bring ye to grief."

"Give me the candle, hag! Come on, parson."

"Nay," replied Humphrey, "I care not for a second look; and you're such a brave lad you'll do well enough without me."

"It'll be a fine story to carry back to our dragoons that an able-bodied parson is afraid of a dead darkey! What's a man good for that's scared at the sight of a corpse?"

"Say no more, scoffs, for I am with you. It's little that I care for men, living or dead, armed as I am with the sword of the flesh and the sword of the spirit."

The parson swung his muscular body into the cellar, and groped about after Giles, who poked in every corner with his sword, and overturned everything that could by any possible chance conceal a human figure.

"How is it?" queried Humphrey, sarcastically. "Is that little insect still in your ear?"

The sergeant looked over his shoulder to give Humphrey a sharp reply, and coming unwittingly upon the body of Jaffer, tumbled over it. The light was extinguished by his fall, and he found himself upon the cold lump of mortality, in the midst of a darkness that was most intense.

"By Heavens! he breathes—his heart beats—he is warm!" cried Giles. There was a silence of a moment, in which the sergeant's hands and senses were busy; then there was a sudden outcry.

"Here he is! here he is! help, help!"

Immediately there followed a struggle, and the trap-door was instantly closed. The chaplain stood paralyzed with superstitious awe. It appeared to him that that black horror, Jaffer, had revived and grappled with his friend.

"Verily, we are beset by the powers of darkness!" he exclaimed. "Bring a light, woman, bring a light!"

Humphrey might as well have been in the centre of the earth for all the effect his words produced. He heard the crack and strain of limb opposed to limb and muscle to muscle, as Giles and his unseen adversary rolled upon the ground and tugged at each other in various positions.

"Contendest thou with man or devil?" demanded the chaplain, in an excited voice.

Before he received a reply, the invisible combatants had struggled to their feet and fallen again heavily.

"For God's sake, Humphrey, help me!" answered Giles, speaking with extreme difficulty.

"A candle, woman, a candle!" roared the chaplain.

"Short'll be the bit o' candle that ye'll git from me, and long'll be the time ye'll wait for it!" screamed Deb from above.

"Accursed witch of Endor!" exclaimed Humphrey. "As I live she has fastened the door upon us!"

"Ay, that I have! and it won't open ag'in till ye're fine enough for the wind to blow ye away."

"What means the sorceress?" said the bewildered chaplain, feeling about in the inky blackness.

Giles and his antagonist rolled to his feet.

"Avaunt! man or devil, now I have thee!" and casting himself desperately upon the twain, seized one by the throat.

"Help! help!" gasped Giles in a choking voice.

"Be of good cheer, sergeant, for I am helping thee mightily. I have Apollyon by the throat, and if he have not an extraordinary tenacity of life, I will soon finish him."

While the parson was speaking, he who was uppermost disengaged himself and slipped away, while the throttled man writhed and twisted beneath the iron fingers that clutched him.

"Fool!" said a voice from out the dark-

ness. "Wouldst thou strangle thy friend?"

"Good God!" cried Humphrey. "What am I doing?"

He relinquished his hold.

"By the Lord!" muttered Giles, the breath rattling in his throat. "I'll have you hanged in sight of the whole regiment! A moment longer and my business would have been done. What in the devil's name possesses ye?"

"Friend Giles, it was a device of Satan, by which I was to be made guilty of thy death."

"Device of Satan or not, if I could see, I would plant as good a blow between thy two eyes as ever felled an ox!" answered the indignant Giles.

"It was but a mistake. The best of us do not always hit the nail on the head, nor is our zeal at all times according to knowledge," replied Humphrey, apologetically.

"Parson, unwittingly you have done me an ill turn, which at present I can't forgive; but what voice was it that relaxed your grasp at my throat?"

"I know not, if it were not thy late adversary, which seemeth to me unreasonable."

"My late adversary," answered Giles, "was no doubt him of whom we are in search, and for the good turn he has done me he shall hang the easier. I will cover the rope with silk that it shall not chafe his neck."

"For which he will thank thee, no doubt," responded Humphrey, dryly. "Well, we have him; the next thing is to get out with him."

"Hillo, old woman! let up—let up!" shouted the sergeant.

"Do ye surrender yourselves prisoners of war?" queried Captain Deb, in a shrill voice.

"Devil a bit on't! so open, quick, or I'll raise the very old Nick with your shanty. You've tricked me once, but you can't do it twice. I've got your tory spy fast and tight, and advise ye, as a reasonable critter, to open that trap to let us go out with our prisoner. In case of your refusal, I'll cut the spy into inch pieces, as true as I'm a sergeant in the Continental Army."

"As for the lad, Guy Deerin, he can take keer of himself in a place so black that you can't see a hand afore ye. The lad wasn't made for hangin', and hung he sha'n't be. He shall burn first! Ay! I'll burn ye all in a heap, if ye don't stan' back and 'low him free and unobstructed passage from the cellar, and ten minutes start after he leaves the cabin. What say ye to that, ye hounds o' the Continental Congress?" retorted Deb.

"You crow loud for an old hen," returned Giles, "but it will go hard with us if we a'n't up there of our own exertions in less than a minute."

"Try it, my dears, try it!" answered the determined Hadley.

"Chaplain, brace your hands on your knees while I mount your back and push open the trap."

"It opens downward," said Humphrey.

"It matters not; it shall open in whatever direction I put my strength to it."

The chaplain placed himself as he was instructed, the sergeant mounted his back, placed his shoulders to the trap, and was lifting with might and main, when the parson sprang from beneath him with a roar that would have done honor to a full-chested bullock, giving him a breath-starting fall upon his face. This disaster may be attributed entirely to Captain Deb, who had incontinently taken a kettle of boiling water from the fire, and turned a part of its contents upon the trap, a portion of which uncomfortable fluid finding its way freely through the crevices, fell in a scalding little rivulet on the chaplain's extended neck.

"Take that, ye rebels, as an airnest of the love I bear ye."

The sergeant, so suddenly deprived of his foundation, plumped directly under the trickling stream, and received a warmer tribute of the old woman's affection than the parson; for striking him upon the shoulders, it saturated his garments, and made him dance around the cellar for a minute or two like an automaton harlequin. Giles being a soldier, used language on this occasion that all exemplary persons would feel it their duty to condemn. Even the chaplain was shocked, and stopped rubbing his neck to reprimand the infuriated officer.

"Such oaths," he asserted, with gravity, "will sink the whole continental army. If swear you must, methinks you would find sufficient relief by swearing by Congress or Washington, and in milder cases by Green or

Gates, Somerton, or even Rainford, according to a regularly graduated descending scale."

"Have a pint of bilin' water poured on your back, and try it; if your scale don't run up higher'n than a kite can fly, I'll eat my sword, scabbard and all."

"Do you surrender?" shrieked Mrs. Hadley.

"We'll answer that by-and-by, old woman, when we've bundled ye on a horse, and got ye fairly under way to camp," replied Giles, in a towering passion. Then, to Humphrey:

"Draw your sabre, parson, and let us make an end o' Guy Deerin'. Poke about in every corner, and if you start him, cut him down as you would a mullen-stock. You go that way, and I'll go this. He'll dodge round right smart, but we can't help closin' on him arter a time. I's in hopes to carried him in triumph to camp; but the hag's hot water has shortened his life at least twenty-four hours."

During this colloquy, the subject of the sergeant's vengeance made his way slowly and noiselessly to the middle of the cellar, where

he again shielded himself with the body of Jaffer. With his head close to the ground, he could hear very distinctly the stealing footsteps of his executioners moving this way and that. The ominous silence was broken presently by an exultant shout from Giles.

"Die, villain! I have ye at last. Take that!"

There was a fierce lunge, suddenly followed by a piercing shriek from Humphrey.

"God of hosts!" he cried. "You have smitten me even as Joab smote Abner with the hinder end of the spear."

"I knew not," answered the sergeant, drawing forth his bloody weapon, "that the rascal had arms."

"Saviour of sinners! thou thyself art the rascal! Thy sword has passed clean through my body. Verily, I am spitted like a fowl for roasting. This murder will sit heavily on thy soul to-night, Jim Giles. The Lord rebuke thee, Satan!"

Humphrey's voice was as solemn as if it came from the tomb of ten thousand martyrs.

"I have stabbed you, I do believe, and the devil is in the luck! If you have any last words to say, out with 'em before your strength is gone, arter which I'll finish the killin' o' that invisible fiend, who is indirectly the cause of this damnable disaster," answered Giles, considerably disturbed by what he had done.

"Of a truth, I believe it's my left arm, and not my body that you have thrust through. The blood is escaping terribly fast."

"If it be but your arm," said Giles, with returning composure, "you have used profanities too high up in that same graduated scale which you talked of not long ago. For a simple stab through the arm, 'By Gates!' or 'By Green!' should have answered all the purposes of pain or anger; while Washin'ton and Congress should have been reserved for a thrust in the lungs or stomach."

"Were I wounded in battle, maladroit Giles, I could bear the infliction with some degree of composure; but to be hacked to pieces through sheer awkwardness when there is no need of it, puts me in a passion. Truly, here is a great waste of patriotic blood. I shall probably lay my bones in this unlucky vault."

"Die here?" answered the sergeant, somewhat alarmed. "Tis a thing I object to. You have no right to die anywhere without orders. I'll call to the old jade and try to get out o' this darkness. Hillo, Deb! let us out o' this rat-trap. The parson's badly hurt, and I'll bleed to death in a few minutes if something isn't done for him."

"Let him bleed! I wish every rebel in the country was bleedin' thrice as fast. If Washin'ton hisself had his jugulers cut, it would be God's mercy on a distracted country."

"Woman," argued Giles, who saw the necessity of rendering her pliable, "you're a reg'lar trump; and I never thought the worse of ye for havin' pluck. To be sure, I've banded words with ye and had my jest; but that's human natur', and I'm sure, at heart, I never meant ye any evil."

The sergeant's voice was quite penitent and subdued.

"The devil was sick, the devil a monk would be; The devil was well, the devil a monk was he!" replied Mrs. Deb Hadley, totally unmoved by Giles' rhetoric.

"You are too hard on a body," rejoined the sergeant, with affected humility. "You are too sensible a woman to take the rough

ways of a soldier in earnest. Come, now, let's up, that's a good old soul! Miss Redmond wants to sleep, and we're content to go away with our prisoner, besides givin' you a guinea for your trouble."

"A cunnin' knave has a cunnin' trick," quoth Mrs. Hadley. "You like proverbs, and it were a burnin' shame if you didn't have enough of 'em when you're stannin' as 'twere, on the edge of eternity. You've got a parson with ye, my dear, and you won't go out the world 'thout the benefit o' clergy. So clap down and at your prayers, for I'm gettin' the kindlin' ready, and the whole consarn 'll soon be in a light blaze."

A notable tumult immediately followed above; everything seemed relapsing into chaos. The chaplain was holding his wounded arm and moaning with pain; the blackness of darkness was around them. Fear began to creep into the stout heart of the sergeant.

"In the name of God!" he shouted, "what are you doin'?"

"Pilin' the table, and chairs, and benches, and feather-bed, and straw-bed in a heap over the trap, so's to make a jolly fire when it starts," was the cool rejoinder.

"Heaven and earth!" groaned Humphrey. "I believe the hag means it. We shall be smothered here like rabbits in a hole. Truly, burning is a death crucifying to the flesh. We had better come to terms at once."

"Tom Thornton! Tom Thornton!" shouted Giles, at the top of his voice.

"Little good will it do ye to call Tom Thornton; he's been snorin' for the last ten minutes, and the door is bolted ag'in him, besides. Make up your minds quick, for I'm jest goin' to clap a coal into the straw-bed!" retorted Deb, rattling the fire-shovel and poking at the fire with the tongs.

"If we allow the spy to pass out unmolested, what assurance have we that you'll keep faith with us? Two to one, you'll shnt the door in our faces and keep us here til' your son comes, with his knives at his back," interrogated Giles, perceiving that the advantage was wholly with the woman.

"Do as you like and nothin' on compulsion. Trust me, or fare worse. My son Christian will soon be here, and a fine bonfire he'll see if he comes not with haste."

"Hark'ee, Mother Deb! Let Miss Judith vouch for your good faith, and the rogue shall go in peace; but for God's sake don't keep us here till the poor chaplain bleeds to death."

"I will—I do vouch for her!" answered Judith, earnestly. "I feel assured that whatever treaty you make with Mrs. Hadley, will be strictly carried out; I pledge my word that it shall be."

"That's the voice that I like to hear! The matter's settled. Cap'n Deb, I surrender! Guy Deering, you sly, invisible fiend, luck has stood your friend once more. You've heerd what's been said, and how we're circumvented. Mother Deb hovers ye as if you's one of her own chickens. I'm sorry, mister, you've got into such a brood, and if you ain't hanged for't, it'll be no fault of mine."

Deering had arisen, and was standing near the trap.

"There are few things that we see with the same eyes," he answered, in a suppressed voice. "You and I, Sergeant Giles, do not, and may never understand each other."

"I don't know as I greatly care to have a better understanding. One thing, however, I should like to know, and that is, why you didn't let this blunderin' parson strangle me?" said the sergeant.

"My motives I have little time and less inclination to explain. When we meet again—"

"May it be at the foot of the gallows!" interrupted Giles.

"You are, indeed, an unforgiving enemy," added Deering, sadly.

"Love of country is in my blood," quoth Giles. "I hate everything that is treacherous and underhanded, as 'twere. I've done my best to take ye, and I think you won't object as a triffin' favor to say as much, should you chance to fall in with Rainford, which is very probable."

"I can testify," responded the spy, "that ye have hunted me like hounds. Ay! it has been the same thing over and over for months—flight and pursuit, pursuit and flight. I shall die one day, I doubt not, ignominiously; scoffed at by neighbors and kinsmen, despised by those whose principles I respect."

"Then I exhort thee to turn away from following after strange gods," said Humphrey, with emphasis. "As Paul says—"

"As I've often told ye, parson, it's what Rainford says that does the business," retorted Giles, abruptly.

The trap-door sprang open with a creaking, dissonant sound.

"Farewell," said Deering. "I forgive you as much as man may for the strait to which I have this night been reduced. To the angel who saved me from your misguided wrath," he added, as he sprang from the vault and stood beside Judith, "I shall ever, ever be grateful."

"Speak not of it, but fly. I have listened to the pleadings of mercy, for the pains and penalties of thy trade shock me, and may not be lightly borne by weak human nature. Depart, Guy Deering, if the way be clear, and let us mutually pray that we may meet no more in this mutable world."

The accents of Judith were low and touching.

The spy stood before her with an expression of indescribable melancholy.

"Such a prayer, beautiful Judith, I cannot offer. Thou hast been the one solitary ray of happiness that has shone through the dark cloud of my life."

"Marry, come up!" exclaimed Deb. "You're makin' love to my son Christian's wife! But that's not the game for you, lad. Come! it's time you was movin'. I'll open the door soft, so's not to disturb Thornton, and then, my fine royal British boy, trust to your legs."

"The wife of Christian Hadley!" murmured Deering, with less surprise than Judith expected to see him exhibit. "What mockery is this?"

"Stay not, I entreat!" cried Judith. "You have heard the truth, terrible as it is. The door is open. Hush! speak not!"

"Come, my gallant boy!" whispered Deb.

"There's nothin' to fear. This half-clad, half-starved beggar of a rebel is sleepin' like a swine. Step over him, and good luck to ye!"

Deering looked tenderly at Judith, muttered "God bless you!" and the next moment his steps were heard in the forest. Five minutes later, Giles, the chaplain, and the drowsy Thornton, mounted their horses and scampered away. The latter loitered, and in a spirit of mischief discharged a pistol into the thatched roof of the cabin before he followed his companions.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE SECRET OF GUY DEERING.

"There goes the last of 'em!" said Mrs. Hadley. "I hope to goodness they'll fall in with the Royal Americans. Short work would my son Christian make with sich fire-brands."

"What did he fire at?" asked Judith, still anxious for Deering.

"At nothin', child! it was mere bravado; and to tell us what he would do if he had a chance. But the day of sich unatraits is short, which is some comfort. Darter-in-law, you're a brave girl; and it's a thousand pities that you don't love my son Christian, with his right royal red, and his commission in his pocket."

"Speak not of him! Have I not enough to think of—the destruction of my home, the dispersion of my friends, and the doubt that involves the fate of Miriam? Woman, the north and the south are not farther distant than your son and myself."

"I know that we aren't all made up alike, darter; and what's wholesome for one is rank poison for another. But it's a matter o' time, gal; all a matter o' time! A great doctor is Time; he brings round his patients arter awhile, curin' 'em with doses of days, months, and years. I've seen them as wanted to die, reconciled to their fate, and made to rejoice in it."

"I hear somethin'," said Meg.

"There's allers noises hereabouts. The dead and splintered branches creak on the trees; the leaves go scurrin' afore the wind, and rabbits and squirrels scamper across the woodland paths," answered Deb.

"It's none o' them yer, but the rumblin' of a wagon," replied Meg.

"Meg is right, I think," said Judith. "I certainly hear the rattle of wheels."

"I hear it; your young ears are sharper'n mine. It seems as if we should have no rest this blessed night; fast as one goes, another comes. Listen a minute!"

All were silent.

"Whoa, Crazy! A'n't agoin' to run your head ag'in a cabin door, be ye? Hold up, creetur!"

"It's the Swordmaker of the Santee!" said Deb, joyfully. "He's a simple-minded, harmless old boy, and 'll do nobody any mischief. He has often passed here with his horse and cart. He's pooty old, and has a monstrous hump on his back; but is no fool for all that. We've had many a good talk together about the times, the king, the war, and the liberty."

Judith's heart beat fast with expectation. She felt a secret assurance of assistance.

"Who's without?" demanded Deborah, harshly.

"Yes, I've been out," answered the piping voice of Hirl, the hunchback. "I'm here with Crazy and the cart. Been down 'mong the Royal 'Mericans, sharpenin' up the tools of the lads. Open the door, Goody, and let in the old man."

The bolt flew back with uncommon cheerfulness, and the bent figure of Hirl crossed the threshold.

"You'll never find the door o' Deb Hadley closed ag'in ye. What news, old man? How goes the battle? Are they fightin' still? Have they annihilated Somerton's brigade?"

"Yes, I've come to your aid. I seed your son Christian in the thickest o' the skirmage; and proud he looked in his royal red, with his long sword, his gold shoulder-knots, and his commission in his pocket! Lord! Lord! what a extr'ordiner boy! Ah, if I'd had sich a offspring! But it wasn't to be; no, it sn't to be."

"Dear, dear! what a pleasant way you have with ye! So you seed my son Christian a facin' his foes, and a cuttin' 'em down like thistle-heads. I wish his old mother could been there! The liberty's dead, don't ye think 'tis? and the royalty's all alive."

"My name is Hirl; Hirl, for short, though ill-mannered people—"

"Confound the ill-mannered people that speak ill of one that speaks well of my son Christian! Odds my life! seems as if I could smell fire."

"Fire! It's smelt dat yer dis seven or eight, ten minutes," cried Meg.

"You can't put it out!" screamed Hirl. "The thatch is ail a blaze. I seed it come-ways off. My stars! if this pooty young woman isn't Miss Redmond. How on airth did she git here? Well, it makes no odds; you can all tumble into my cart, and if there's an animal that can take ye over the ground, it's Crazy. She's seven year old, but she be a smart one, I vow!"

"A curse on that sleepy dog! he didn't fire his pi-tol for nothin'. The roof's in a blaze! When the sun rises, Deb Hadley won't have a place to lay her head."

The woman looked defiantly up at the roof, down which puffs of smoke now began to drive.

"Let it burn, Goody Hadley. There's timber in the forest to make another, and willin' hands among the Royal 'Mericans to build it. Cheer up, old mother! don't never complain till you have the neuralagy and the rheumatics, and are as hard o' hearin' as a whale at the bottom o' the ocean," answered Hirl, rubbing his hands, encouragingly, and obviously mustering a great deal of philosophy for the benefit of Captain Deb.

"It's easy enough to make comfort for others, old man, when you're goin' on smooth yourself! But I'll have it out of 'em for this. My son Christian shall cut 'em up, and hang 'em up, too. What a world 'tis, when men forgit their 'leigance to the king, and go runnin' arter liberty and Mr. Washin'ton, Congress, and others!"

The injured woman seemed on the point of appealing to Heaven for help against rebels and wrongs.

"The cart's ready; you women folks can jump right in, and away we'll trundle. Crazy's a great creetur to go! I'll take ye to a place where a dog won't dare to move his tongue," replied the swordmaker, gently leading Judith from the cabin.

"That's right, grandaddy! Be keeful o' my son Christian's wife," said Mrs. Hadley, approvingly.

"No, I can't hear no fife. Cap'n hear a

bugle 'less it's pooty near. One o' my ears, you see, is tore all to bits. Heerd the groans o' the wounded, though, when Tarleton tackled Somerton's dragons. Bless me! how the rebels fit! That devil, Rainford, made a great swarth right through the kurnil's calvary. There was two royalists to one rebel; but I'll die if I didn't think, one spell, that the rebels would git the best on't."

"No more o' that, if you want me to ride in your cart!" cried Mother Hadley. "Woe is me! what a sad sight to see it burn. What'll Christian do for the housekeepin' and the wife? D'ye think I can leave it, man, without grief? And where will ye go? What spot of airth is there where Deb Hadley can find another home ready at hand?"

"Trust your brave son for that, and hop into the cart. Miss Judith can set on the seat with the old man, and you and the yaller creetur can stow yourselves 'mong the luggage; there's plenty o' room—plenty on't. Come, Goody, bear a hand! Don't be nussin' your troubles; they'll grow fast enough without care."

Deborah Hadley, with much complaining and muttering, finally mounted the cart, and rode away with her face turned sorrowfully to her burning cabin.

"You'll know how good it is, now, to be burned out," said Hirl. "Many, beside yourself, have been made houseless this night. Squire Redmond's house, and stables, and negro huts have turned to ashes since sunset."

"Tell me, good swordmaker," said Judith, with trembling eagerness, "if you were near during that terrible scene; and can you give me any information respecting my sister Miriam?"

"Thank God, I can!" answered the swordmaker, with a fervor that made Deborah Hadley start. "She was rescued from the flames; she is safe."

"Heaven bless you, old man, for this assurance! You relieve me of an oppressive and terrible anxiety. And Colonel Somerton?"

"He was saved, too. How young gals take to handsome uniforms! Now, if it had been an old man like me, no one would took the trouble to ask about me. But that's natur', I s'pose."

"Judge not so uncharitably, worthy swordmaker," replied Judith. "Kindness is seldom forgotten, and I trust my memory is good. But where are you driving us?"

"To a place where you'll be safe enough, I'll warrant."

The swordmaker touched his mare with his whip, and she started at a pace which soon took them to the end of their journey, which was an unfinished and deserted house on the margin of the forest.

"It was built by a rebel," said Hirl, "who left it half done to go a sogerin', and it's ten to one if he ever comes back."

The first beams of morning were glittering in the east, when Judith followed the swordmaker into the dwelling. The first object that met her view was Miriam. Goody Grindle, who as usual was performing the office of nurse, had fallen asleep upon her post; she was brought reluctantly from her dreams by the hurried footsteps of Judith, as she sprang to embrace her sister. Glancing about the room, Judith saw Somerton approaching from an obscure corner. There was a flush upon his face, and unusual vivacity in his expression. The young lady extended her hand, saying:

"Surely, colonel, you have been the subject of magical arts, else I should see you on a couch of pain."

"I think I may affirm safely that I have been under the influence of necromancy since I rode in the swordmaker's cart to the present moment."

He looked at Miriam expressively, who averted her eyes.

"Not to your harm, I hope," replied Judith, smilingly.

"To my everlasting good, I firmly believe!" he answered, with a fervor that was quite enigmatical to Judith.

"Don't look so puzzled-like, child!" cried Goody Grindle, who was by this time wide awake. "There's been queer doin's this night. Bless us, Miriam! you needn't wink and blink at me to keep me from talkin', for it's my nature to be continually runnin' on. The truth is, Judy—and the truth must come out when I have anything to do with it—the colonel's been and made love to Miriam, thinkin' it was you; and I'll swear if I don't think she's ac-

cepted him, burns, petticoat, and all, jest as he stands."

At this juncture, Deborah Hadley, who had stood in the back-ground, advanced, and confronted Somerton.

"Dear goodness! here's a pair on us. I should say. War sort of mixes up things, don't it?" she said, with a comical leer that was quite irresistible.

Somerton glanced at his novel toilet, for he still wore the petticoat that Betsey Grindle, in her superabundant kindness, had invested him with, and joined heartily in the laugh that was raised at his expense.

"You're an oad figger to make love," added Deborah; "and it's the luckiest thing in the world that you didn't set your heart on my son Christian's wife."

"Wife?" repeated Somerton, vaguely.

"Nothin' less nor more," answered Deb, stiffly, then turning to Judith, added: "I have pleasure in introducin' to you and everybody, my darter-in-law, Mrs. Judith Hadley, wife of Christian Hadley, captain of the Royal Americans, with his commission in his pocket, signed by the king himself."

"What's the lunatic talkin' about?" queried Betsey Grindle, her pride beginning to mount to her face. "This is my niece, and the wife of nobody, much less of that infamous tory, Christian Hadley, the mention of whose name makes her pale as a lily."

"Ask the gal!" retorted Deborah, defiantly. "She won't deny that she was brought to my house, that a parson was sent for and came, and the ceremony was performed."

"What means this, Judith?" cried Miriam. "Speak, Meg!"

"They've jes' done gone married her, whether she would or no. I heerd the whole ceremony; but goodness, Miss Merry! she was in a dead faint, and I don't b'lieve sensed a dozen words of it. I sot there a holdin' on to her, and I prayed; and I prayed; and I prayed that dem yer wheels o' time would roll 'em all into eternity together."

"Know you anything of this?" asked Somerton, looking at the swordmaker.

"I know what they say, kurnil, and if the marriage is binded, Deb Hadley has got a nice darter-in-law."

Judith was by this time nearly insensible, and Miriam and her aunt were hanging over her in great alarm and bewilderment.

"These wrongs must cease," said Somerton, with energy.

"And they will!" muttered the swordmaker.

"Long live the king!" exclaimed Deborah Hadley.

"Who'll take that masculine woman by the shoulders and put her out doors?" demanded Betsey Grindle, appealing to no one in particular.

"Yes, who'll do it?" repeated Captain Deb.

"What's that?" cried Meg, suddenly.

There was a pause. The distant blast of a bugle was heard; the mellow notes drifted into the open doors and windows like soft billows of harmony.

"I should know those sounds," said Somerton.

"'Tis the blare of a trumpet! said Mrs. Hadley, quickly. "A guinea to a shillin' that the royal Americans are comin', with my son Christian at their head. What think ye, old Hirl?"

"I can't hear much, but jedgin' by what little I can hear, I should say a company of boss was comin' this way at a clean gallop," answered the hunchback, quietly.

"Be they friend or foe?" interrogated Deb.

"I should think they might be one or 'tother!" screamed the swordmaker. "In the course o' natur' they must be for or ag'in'st."

"Any fool knows that!" replied Mrs. Hadley, complimentarily.

The bugle-notes grew louder and louder, and the heavy tramp of horsemen drew nearer. Manifestly every person in the dwelling awaited the results with anxiety. The matter was soon settled; Rainford dashed up to the door at the head of his dragoons. Seeing Somerton at the window, he threw himself from the saddle, and hurried to greet him.

"My dear colonel," he said, "I scarcely expected this pleasure, although I have been informed of your escape from Hadley, and his ruffians, and of your being conveyed to Redmond's plantation. I knew the house was burned, and feared the worst."

"Providence has kept me alive, gallant Rainford, and I hope to ride again to battle

by your side. How is it? Are our poor fellows cut to pieces? Have the dragoons lost heart and courage?"

"They have been roughly used, and are terribly harried with fighting overpowering numbers. But the stout lads are good for another day. A few hours' rest and a hearty meal, will put most of them right; but some of them are done with eating. Well, that's a soldier's fate, Somerton. Whom have you here? Ah! I see bright eyes, and others that are not so bright. What is that masculine creature in the black coat and red petticoat? She looks like the devil's dam."

"And such she is; she is the mother of Christian Hadley," replied the colonel.

"Infamy enough for one woman. I see a face that I know—that sharp female, Betsey Grindle. But who are those pretty creatures who look as much alike as two peas in the same pod?"

"The Redmond sisters," answered Somerton, glancing at the twain with evident pride.

"The Redmond sisters," repeated Rainford, musingly. "My gallant colonel, I shall watch you! With such fair nurses, I fear your wounds will not heal by the first intention, as surgeons say. Well, Love and Glory are yoke-fellows."

"A rough soldier has little time for sentiment at such a crisis as this," replied Somerton, coloring.

"Time? you've taken it by the forelock, ere this; if you haven't, you've neglected your opportunity; that's all I can say. Here's the swordmaker, too. A queer old body is the swordmaker! By-the-way, I have rare news for you: Marion's brigade is thundering up from the swamps of the Santee. We'll drive Tarleton into the river, and send him back with banners trailed in the dust. This is not all; as I came up I saw a man running across a field. I put spurs to my horse, leaped fences, ditches, and gates, and finally captured him. Whom do you think it was? It was our old friend, the spy."

"The spy!" said the colonel, with a start.

"The spy!" repeated Hirl, in a voice more indicative of consternation than surprise.

"The spy!" gasped Judith.

"The same," replied Rainford. "And you may rest assured," he added, significantly, "that he'll never be caught again."

"Have you murdered him?" asked the swordmaker, huskily.

"A continental soldier, old man, never commits murder," retorted Rainford, haughtily.

"Tell me, oh tell me, sir—have you—have you—" began Judith, with strange vehemence.

"Lady," answered Rainford, "he lives. Giles—sergeant Giles, bring forward the prisoner."

The word was passed along; and after some commotion among the dragoons, Giles and Thornton appeared, leading the unfortunate Deering, whose arms were pinioned tightly. His face was calm, pale, and melancholy. He did not notice Judith, but a shudder passed over his person when he saw the swordmaker. For an instant he was affected, but presently confronted Rainford and Somerton with self-possession.

"Rash, misguided man!" exclaimed Somerton, sorrowfully. "I had hoped that we should never meet again, and that the past had taught you wisdom. You have tempted Providence one time too many; nothing can save you."

"Of what am I accused?" demanded the man, with an unflinching eye.

Judith looked anxiously from one to the other of the two men.

"Every child on the Santee could tell you your crime. The name of Guy Deering is too well known," returned the colonel.

"My name is Henderson—Max Henderson."

"The same subterfuge and falsehood!" cried Rainford, contemptuously.

"It is my duty to assure you that this will not avail you," added Somerton, with firmness.

"I have not the slightest hope that it will," replied the spy.

The swordmaker stood watching the latter, and Judith; his countenance expressive of the deepest interest.

"Ah my boy, my poor boy, why didn't you keep out o' their clutches arter you left the cabin?" exclaimed Deborah Hadley, with evident sorrow.

"Do you hear that, your honor? She acknowledges that he was at her cabin, to which I can swear; for I saw him there, and should

have taken him, if the chaplain and I hadn't been sarcumvented by that she tory. I can testify, too, that she called him Guy Deering more nor once. Lord, colonel! we can swear his life away in no time," interposed Giles, with much zeal.

"Woman," said the spy, looking steadily at mother Hadley; "I have entered no cabin of yours in the last twelve hours. I have been too busy to avail myself of the shelter of a roof."

"Cool enough! cool enough!" said the sergeant, with an incredulous shrug. "Don't know nothin' 'bout bein' hid in the cellar. I s'pose, nor what happened there, nor how you got away at last?"

"I protest, gentlemen, that I am utterly ignorant of all this," answered the accused, impressively.

"He knows no more about it than a child unborn! As for bein' at my cabin, that was mor'n a week ago," asserted Deb, promptly. "This lad isn't no more like Guy Deering than a cheese is like the moon. His name is Henderson, and nothin' else. Dear me! I knowed the Hendersons years ago, man and boy, woman and child."

"Good mother," said the spy, calmly, "let us have nothing but the truth, for I am placed where the truth will serve me as well as falsehood; and neither can avail me aught."

"And it's the truth I've been tellin', which I'm allers ready to tell for friend or foe. Who can have the heart to bring such a fine-lookin' man to the halter? But men become desperately wicked when they forgit the king and run arter liberty, Mr. Washin'ton, Congress, and others."

Deborah shook her head regretfully, and sighed. The swordmaker advanced a step toward the accused, who said, quickly, in a deprecating voice:

"Nay, old man, I conjure you not to speak! The few feeble words that you could say in my favor will not affect the fate that is reserved for me, in the smallest degree. Your testimony might involve another. For God's sake, be quiet!"

Rainford and Somerton exchanged a few words in low tones. The former then gave an order in the same voice to an officer near him. Judith cast herself at the swordmaker's feet, and seizing his hand, cried:

"Oh, sir, if you can say any thing in favor of this wretched man, I entreat you, by all that you love, to say it!"

"What can I do, child; what can I do? I am neither Somerton, nor Rainford, nor Washington," answered Hirl, mournfully.

"Do you know this lady, sir?" asked Somerton, pointing to Judith, and fixing his regards steadily upon the spy.

"I have reason to believe her to be Judith Redmond; but never had the pleasure and honor of her acquaintance," he replied.

Judith arose, and gave him a reproachful, sorrowful glance.

"It is Judith," said the swordmaker, in a voice so changed that every one involuntarily looked at him.

"I have heard much of her goodness. May God bless her!"

Judith was bewildered. What did this mean? Was it a generous concealment to save her name and fame; or was it a justifiable subterfuge, resorted to to weigh in his favor by embarrassing the question of his identity?

An officer approached Rainford and said, "We are ready, sir."

"Ladies," said Somerton, "you had better retire into the house, and close the doors. The further examination of the prisoner will be conducted more privately."

"Such is not your purpose," said Judith, with empression. "You have something terrible in view."

"Mister," said the swordmaker, addressing the spy, "what might be the matter with your hands and arms? It 'pears like as though you'd passed through a furnace."

Somerton heard the words, and glanced at what he had not before observed—the hands and arms of the prisoner. His manner changed in a moment; he sprang toward Deering, saying:

"I conjure you to tell me how you received those injuries?"

The man's hands were blistered and charred, and his coat and linen hung in scorched threads from his arms.

"Question me not," replied Deering.

"I insist!" continued Somerton, emphatically.

"In rescuing two human beings from a burning building, I received these wounds from the angry flames," answered the spy, unassumingly.

"I knew it! I knew it!" exclaimed Somerton. "It was you who bore me from Redmond's house—it was you who saved Miriam. I had an unaccountable apprehension of it at the time, although my bodily faculties were paralyzed by suffocating gases."

"Captain Rainford, I am ready! I thank you that this time it is not hanging," said the prisoner, with a faint smile.

Sergeant Giles took him by the arm to lead him away. Some ten rods distant, a dozen dragoons could be seen in line, under arms. While Somerton stood deeply affected by this development, General Marion and two of his aides arrived at the scene. His coming was hailed with universal cheering by the soldiers.

Rainford then proceeded to relate the circumstances of Deering's capture, and the unsatisfactory results of his examination, both on that and a previous occasion, with the extenuating fact of the rescue of Somerton and Miriam.

General Marion examined the prisoner attentively, and appeared impressed by his brave bearing.

"About his identity, there can be no mistake," he said. "This is the same man that I saw on the morning that I wrote that letter that prevented the execution of an innocent person."

"That cannot be possible," replied Rainford; "for this is the identical individual that we had in custody, and who mysteriously escaped on the next night."

"You must be deceived by a resemblance."

The general fixed his keen eyes on Judith, whose distress he had noticed.

"Young woman," he said, suddenly, "do you know this man?"

There was a dead silence.

"I am answered," said Marion.

Judith was terribly pale.

"Is he or is he not called Guy Deering?" resumed Marion, with a directness and energy that it was impossible to evade.

Judith attempted to speak; but her voice died in her throat.

"There is no such evidence in the world as that!" said Marion, in a suppressed voice.

"Gentlemen," said the prisoner, solemnly, "I acknowledge that I am Guy Deering!"

"That settles it," observed Marion. "Had he saved a score of men from a building to which his own perty applied the burning brand, there could be but one fate awarded him. It is the will of Washington."

"You confess?" queried Somerton, nervously.

"I confess to the name—not to the deeds."

"Let us not protract this scene," observed Marion.

"Say once more," continued Somerton, gloomily, "that you are Guy Deering."

"Say it not—say it not!" cried the swordmaker; "for it is a foul yet generous lie. Your name is Henderson; and the universal world cannot change it, if it spoke in one concentrated voice, and called you Deering. You shall not—shall not die!"

"In the name of Heaven, be silent!" entreated the prisoner.

Judith's eyes wandered wonderingly to Hirl, the hunchback.

"Silent! the angels forbid! It is time to speak. I will not permit the sacrifice. Your noble soul shall not go out of the world in the blackness of infamy."

Every face was turned with supreme astonishment to the swordmaker.

"Consider—reflect! What will you—what can you do?" remonstrated the spy, with thrilling earnestness.

"I will bring here the man who has borne the name of Guy Deering. I will place before these gentlemen the real Guy Deering."

Judith began to tremble; something in the voice of Hirl was turning her sudden joy into terror.

The old man stood up erect; he cast his slouched hat upon the ground; he tore off a wig and false shoulders, and Hirl, the hunchback, was transformed into the exact counterpart of the prisoner.

There was a simultaneous outburst of astonishment. For a short space, no one spoke. Judith glanced anxiously from the swordmaker to the prisoner; doubt and perplexity lingered but a moment on her face.

"Twin brothers!" exclaimed Somerton, lost in admiration and wonder.

"Fatal, fatal magnanimity!" murmured the spy. "I should have drained this cup alone."

The swordmaker stretched out his hands toward his brother, exclaiming: "If there is a Guy Deering in the world, I am he! If there has been a spy between the British and American lines, I am that spy!"

The prisoner rushed into the open arms; he could not immediately command his voice. He raised his head presently, and, disengaging himself, said:

"Why should ye, who are our judges, distinguish between us, to throw the greater guilt on this man? If he be guilty, I am equally so."

Rainford coughed; Somerton turned away his head, and there was a perceptible unsteadiness in Marion's voice, when he said to Judith:

"Miss Redmond, which of these two is your lover? She pointed mutely at the swordmaker."

"This, then, is Guy Deering; or, at least, the person who has been thus called," added the general.

"But as both have acted in concert, there can be no difference in the guilt of the parties. It is extraordinary! These men have not the faces of knaves."

"A thousand, thousand thanks, brave general!" cried the spy, fervently.

"This requires looking into, Colonel Somerton. There is, unquestionably, a mystery here which we do not rightly apprehend," continued Marion, his keen eyes glittering upon the brothers, as if to pierce the secret of their lives.

"General," said Somerton, pointing to the man with the blistered hands, "I owe him a life; ay, not one, but two. Do not put it beyond my power to show my gratitude."

Marion shook his head gravely; but made no answer.

"Ye whom Nature has formed with such wondrous similitude, answer me this question: which of you was captured by me, after swimming the river in a desperate race for life?" demanded Somerton, his curiosity deeply excited.

"I was that unfortunate," said the swordmaker.

"And I," added the other, "was the old hunchback who rode into camp soon after, with Crazy and the cart. I gained admission to the prisoner; but, despite your precautions, the same man did not come out that went in."

"I comprehend," said Somerton.

"After leaving the camp," said the swordmaker, "I drove rapidly to Black Swamp, where I showed myself without the disguise of Hirl, the hunchback. The sight of me produced that letter, and prevented the execution of my brother."

"Hold!" interposed Somerton, thoughtfully, addressing the last speaker. "It was you who took me from the tory camp in your cart?"

"It was; and it was my brother Max who afterward found you in the thicket, and gave you the pistol with which you wounded Black Jaffer."

"It was you, Guy, who drove the cart?" said Judith, with flushed face.

"It was I, incomparable Hirl! Did you think the simple trickery of disguise would conceal your identity from me? It was to me that you gave the saw, and that beautiful message; it was I who left you on the margin of your father's plantation, as Old Hirl, to return, presently, as the Spy. You forgot your assumed character, and you branded me as 'Infamous.' It was I, Guy Deering Henderson, that you saved this night at the cabin, with the self-devotion that ought to elevate you among the saints. It was I, too, who took the character and name of the Rev. Elijah Holdfast; and, whatever be my fate, know that the marriage was a mere mummery, without the least legal force. It was thus, oh, Judith, that I watched over and befriended you."

"And so, sir, you deceived my son Christian, and played him false when you ought to stood his friend! I believe, at heart, that ye are rebels both, and have been puttin' your pranks on us all the while, and bringing the enemy to pick off the royal Americans. Oh ye double-faced boys! little did I think, when I's tellin' ye the news from time to time, that you's runnin' arter liberty, and Mr. Washin'ton, Congress and others!" cried Deborah Hadley, in a towering passion.

"This is your darter-in-law with a vengeance!" screamed Goody Grindle. "A nice wife has your son Christian wedded! Repent, woman—repent, afore the wheels o' time roll ye to the clods o' the valley!"

"The light is breaking upon us, I think," remarked Marion, cheerfully. "Look yonder, Deborah Hadley, and tell me what you see?"

The woman shaded her gray brows with her hand, and gazed down the plantation; she saw a charge of cavalry, and redcoats and royal Americans flying in dire confusion.

"Marion's brigade!" muttered Deb. "May never one of 'em die in bed? May they starve miserably in the swamps, or die festerin' in their wounds, without mother, wife, or comrade to soothe their partin' moments!"

"Curse not!" said the chaplain, who had thus far been a silent but interested listener.

"Here comes some of my men bringing a prisoner," said Marion.

"'Tis my son Christian!" shrieked Mrs. Hadley, "and his royal red is redder with blood. Ye barbarians! to kill one of the king's anointed, with his commission in his pocket!"

The woman sprang forward and threw herself upon her son, who was brought in upon a litter by four men, who set it down near the general. One of them touched his hat, and said:

"We bring you the notorious Christian Hadley, whom justice has at length overtaken."

Hadley's eyes rested on the brothers Henderson, and rising upon his elbow, he shook his fist at them with inexpressible rage and hatred.

"'Twas ye who betrayed me!" he cried, with startling vehemence. Then to his mother: "Woman, woman, behold the traitors! they are rebels, rebels! They have made us their playthings and their tools. But for them, Marion and his men would be restin' quietly to-day in the swamps of the Santee."

Just then Somerton observed something roll from the pocket of the swordmaker, and picked it up. It was a bullet that was hollow, fastened in the center by a hinge and spring nicely adjusted. He opened it quietly; it contained a slip of paper, which he read and passed to General Marion with a smile of intelligence.

The swordmaker saw the movement and sprang to intercept it, but it was too late.

"I meant," he exclaimed, with earnestness, "that the secret should perish with me. I call you both to witness—you, General Marion, you, Colonel Somerton, that I have done my duty; that I have not betrayed my trust; that I have not yielded to a cowardly love of life, that I am not infamous!"

The swordmaker turned with heaving chest to Judith, who held out her hands, and said: "Forgive, forgive!"

"We will one and all bear witness, that the Swordmaker of the Santee has nobly discharged the trust reposed in him by one whose name I will not here mention," answered General Marion, with a fervor that testified to his sincerity. "He who adheres to duty under the blighting imputation of dishonor, is indeed a true hero; and you, Miss Judith Redmond, if I have interpreted your feelings aright, cannot place your trust in one more worthy than he who has passed to and fro among us as Hirl, the hunchback."

"Marry come up! I believe the gal's gone and fell in love 'thout lettin' her aunt know it. Well, we must be happy while we may, for the wheels o' time 'll soon roll us away," said Betsey Grindle.

"Let me take away my dyin' son, and that's all the favor I'll ask!" cried Deborah Hadley, glancing fiercely around upon the officers and men.

"Men," said Somerton, "convey the wounded man wherever the woman shall direct."

"Into the house with him! into the house with him, ye murderers!" said Deb. "Sad is the day when my son Christian is brought to me with so little life in his body. I believe they'll have it all their own way—them that run arter liberty, Mr. Washin'ton, Congress, and others. But he shall be buried in his royal red, with his long sword by his side, his gold shoulder-knots, and his commission in his pocket. My boy Christian! my boy Christian!"

"She has a mother's heart," affirmed Betsey Grindle, with a touch of feeling. "The poor creetur is bound up in the man, I dare say, bad as he is. Here comes your father, nieces, and we shall have a great deal to tell him. But we'll take it at our leisure, gals; and my word for it, he won't say 'nay' to the colonel, or Guy Deering, or Henderson."

Miriam blushed, and Judith's face glowed not a little.

"Men," said Marion to those who had gathered about them, "say nothing, conjecture nothing, concerning these men. Let what you know, and what you do not know, remain alike untalked of."

The dragoons cheered heartily, and withdrew to their several posts. That day Tarleton and his troops fled for life, and Liberty made a great stride in South Carolina. The brothers Henderson did not then and there cease to be useful, but performed good service for the patriot cause till peace once more visited the land. However great the obligations under which he put his beloved country, the Swordmaker of the Santee felt them more than repaid by the hand of Judith Redmond, who never more called him "Infamous;" and Colonel Somerton and Miriam often amused their friends in after years by tales of Hirl, the Hunchback.

THE END.

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